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350 GAMES REVIEWED Don't buy a turkey this Christmas!

NEXT GENERATION

Leading edge computer and video **games** 1997

Want the full picture? Then turn the page...



Sony's New PlayStation

Coming in '97: The console that lets *you* make the games

EXCLUSIVE: How to make your own PlayStation games (and then how to sell them). **PLUS:** Tips from the pros

REVEALED!
Everything they *don't* teach you at the DigiPen videogame school

volume **three**

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Yarouze (the Japanese word roughly translates as "Let's Do It!") is a new program from Sony designed to enable anyone with a PC or Mac to make PlayStation games. It's a revolutionary concept, and Next Generation has the exclusive story on page 38

PARAPPA THE RAPPER: Yes! It's another one of those quirky Japanese games! Page 84


SONY
POWER
PlayStation

So could *you* make a game as good as *Nights*?



Cool gift, right? An exclusive version of **Yuji Naka's *Nights*** for Saturn — from Sega of America and **Next Generation**. We hope you enjoy this, your essential ***Next Generation Disc*** — and we also hope you enjoy this month's lead feature.

The sleek black PlayStation you see on these pages **hasn't been revealed in the U.S. before.** It is a **special edition** PlayStation designed to form the centerpiece of a **1997 program from Sony** called *Yarouze* **(the Japanese world roughly translates as "Let's Do It").**

Gamers who buy a Yarouze system (Sony estimates that it will sell for around $750) get a **black PlayStation**, a **serial link** to connect it your Mac or PC, **a CD of PlayStation programming libraries**, and membership to an **online resource** of tips, advice, and updates from Sony Computer Entertainment of America.

And what does all this add up to? All the equipment you need to make your own PlayStation games.

This is a **revolutionary concept.** But it's **not a new one.**

In the **early 1980s**, young upstarts like **Dave Perry** and **Peter Molyneux** were **programming their first games** on **8-bit "home computers"** such as the Commodore 64 and the Sinclair Spectrum. These game machines (make no mistake, the **"home computer"** tag was usually just a marketing ploy) could be programmed **by anyone who chose to learn.** They came equipped with a keyboard, writable memory, and a chunky instruction manual. Even **game magazines of the time** were filled with program listings, and for **budding** game makers looking to learn their trade, it was the **perfect environment.**

But since that time since that time, the low-cost home computers have been replaced by videogame consoles (with no keyboards or programming instruction manuals). Simultaneously, the **sophistication of PC technology** has sped beyond the grasp of ordinary gamers. For most gamers, "making your own game" would be practically impossible.

Until now. With a modest grasp of the **programming language C**, all gamers can start on the road to becoming a game developer. And who will be the **next Dave Perry or Peter Molyneux?**

It could be you...

NEXT GENERATION

NEXT GENERATION

January 1997

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Next Generation shares editorial with the UK-based magazine **EDGE**, and is not affiliated with NeXT Software, Inc. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. To Roppongi, and Andy, who was in smelling distance



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So what do they teach you at videogame school?

If you want to make games for a living, then you should listen to Claude Comair, president of the Digipen school of videogame programming. In this exclusive interview with **NG**, he gives his advise to those who'd like to turn a hobby into a profession



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Sony's new PlayStation: If you can build a better game...

Sony's latest machine costs around $800, is matte black, plugs into a PC or Mac, and is scheduled for a U.S. release this March. Excited? You should be. Because Sony's *Yarouze* system gives you everything you need to program your own PlayStation games



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Every Nintendo 64, Saturn, and PlayStation game reviewed

Yes, you read it right. Over 300 next generation videogames played, reviewed, and rated in the most comprehensive 32-bit and 64-bit gaming guide ever assembled. Don't buy a game before looking here — and don't end up buying a turkey this Christmas





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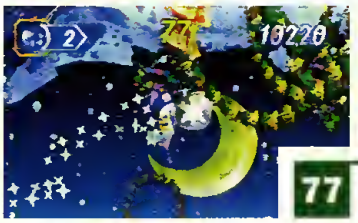
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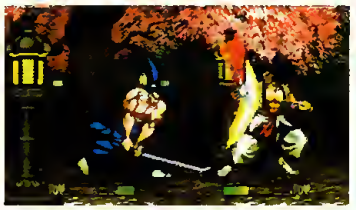


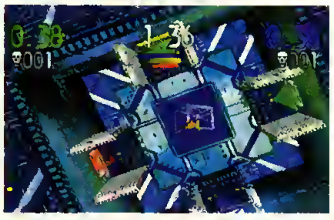
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So what do they teach you at videogame school?
Claude Comair, the president of the Digipen school for videogame programmers, offers his advice to those who want to turn a hobby into a profession

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If you can build a better game...
Sony's Yarouze system lets anyone make a game. We show you how with tips from the pros

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Every Nintendo 64, Saturn, and PlayStation game reviewed
Over 300 next generation games reviewed and rated

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Digipen is the world's first videogame school, and typically, there are hundreds of applicants for each place in its classes. So, for gamers contemplating buying a Sony Yarouze system and making games at home, **NG** talks to Digipen's Claude Comair to ask...



So what do they teach you at videogame school?

Sony's *Yarouze* system will enable many people have a go at programming their own games for the first time. It's an exciting prospect — but also a tough one. So what pitfalls lay in wait for each budding game programmer? What are the common mistakes that first-time programmers make? How can these problems be avoided? What should you do if you stumble upon the best game idea since *Tetris*? And what should you do if you want to turn game programming into a profession?

Claude Comair should know the answers to all these questions. As head of Digipen, the videogame programming school located in Vancouver, it's his job to know. So, if class is all sitting comfortably, over to you Claude...

The first videogame school?

NG: How did Digipen get started?

Claude: Digipen began in the late 1980s, but it was in 1991 — after we realized that we wanted to open a school for animation and videogame programming — that we approached Nintendo for some sponsorship, and they were extremely happy to lend a hand setting up the school we have today. Now we have two sides to the school, a videogame programming side and an animation side.

NG: Where have Digipen graduates ended up?

Claude: On the videogame side, we have some working at Konami and some working at Iguana, for example. These ex-students of our programming division are actually leading the coding of projects.

NG: So does the videogame side of the Digipen school concentrate on just programming? Or do students also learn game design, user interface, and the other elements that go into a game?

Claude: On the videogame side, the main focus is on programming and is mostly science-based. The other side of the school studies animation, and is therefore more focused on art. But there is a good symbiotic relationship between the students from the two camps — they actually intermix and cooperate on common projects. So often students' games will include animation coming from the animation students.

NG: So the videogame programmers don't have to learn to do everything themselves?

Claude: Well, despite the availability of students from the other department, and despite the game programmer himself or herself knowing the basics of teamwork, students still have to come up with their own ideas, their own documentation, and their own game bibles.

Sure, if they need help in specific areas, they can ask for help. But they are taught not just the technical techniques of producing games, but also story development and so on.

NG: So each student learns a little bit about all the aspects of developing a videogame?

Claude: In a team, the programmer needs to know about artists' capabilities — and the best way to do that is to attempt to do something on their own. They are programmers, but they need to be able to talk to the artist, to deal with an artist, to explain what can be done or what cannot be done on the hardware that they are using.

Photography: MARK KOEHLER



Better yet, they sit down and take the electronic pen, or graphic program, or the 3D package and try to attempt to do something — nothing pretentious, but just enough to know what steps the person goes through. Simultaneously, an artist should be taught about programming and what the hardware can do. Ideally, a team comprises people who have all attempted to do the jobs of others, in order to understand the position a colleague is in when asked this or that question. This way, you will achieve a more symbiotic relationship.

"'Why will people want to play your game?' Students have to research this question, and come up with a decent answer"

Basically, the ideal is a creative person who is also an unbelievable scientist, but unfortunately it's not always the case.

NG: But the emphasis is on programming?

Claude: Let's say that 90% of the time our students spend learning general mathematics and computer graphics mathematics, which is more toward matrixes, matrix algebra, vector geometry, and so forth.

NG: Why such an emphasis on mathematics?

Claude: Because math is at the core of programming and understanding computers.

Game ingredients

NG: So how do Digipen's students learn about level design, gameplay, user interface, and all the other factors that determine whether a game is good or bad?

Claude: At Digipen, specialized people will teach you this. We have a very good teacher here who guides our students in this respect and reviews their proposals. All students have to present a proposal document, which is a couple hundred pages thick, trying to convince us why the game they are proposing is good. It also contains an outline of the game's components, how much money they would need to complete it, how many people it would require, what kind of machinery it will take, what kind of specialized talent, and so on.

And yes, one component we study is the interface design. We always try to put ourselves into the shoes of the player and see what psychologically or logically is most instinctive. Would you put your finger to the left first or to the right first? How would you hold the joypad, and what are the ergonomics? How would these physical ergonomics translate into an interface on the screen — would you look first to the left or to the bottom? When you click on something to quit, you should be asked to confirm that you want to quit. If you say yes, you quit; if you say no, you get music welcoming you back into the game, rewarding you.

All these things need to be thought of.

NG: It's hard to imagine that someone at home with a *Yarouze* system would think of all this.

Claude: I believe that many people doing it on their own would miss these little things — and that is why I would recommend that if you would like to pursue programming as a career, then you should seek universities and schools to guide you properly.

How to make games at home

NG: But given that not everyone can attend Digipen, what advice can you give budding programmers who want to start learning with Sony's *Yarouze* system?

What should they do first?

Claude: I would suggest that people should try to make a puzzle game, in order to test their ability in coding to begin with. Also, puzzle games show a lot of a person's creativity. If I gave you $20 million, lots of explosives, and some stunt people and said, "Go make a film," you could create a big splash on the screen that would cater to many people. But if I gave you a couple of dollars and an instamatic camera — then you would have to compensate for a lack of good equipment with a lot of imagination.

NG: And the same is true of videogames?

Claude: Millions of people still play *Tetris* — and yet it is a good example of a program task that can be achieved by just one person.

NG: OK, so after completing a puzzle game, what should *Yarouze* users keep in mind when they try to tackle something a little bigger?

Claude: They have to keep in perspective two things: One, that the game is made of two components living in close relationship — one

cannot live without the other; Two, and a result of this, they need to study their computer sciences.

The two components that make up a game are the story and the artificial intelligence that actually drives the story and results in graphics on the screen. These two major components — art and computer code — have to come together in a very coherent way. A game without the story is not a good game. A good story without clever code turning it into a game is no good either. Thus, no matter how great a







game programmer's imagination may be, the basics cannot be ignored. Game makers have to know their mathematics very well and computer science very well.

NG: *Yarouze* comes complete with many programming libraries, so doesn't this to some extent reduce the need for math and programming skill?

Claude: The danger is that games made by cutting and pasting libraries in this way may end up looking the same — and I don't think that this is what Sony intends. Certainly, it's not the best way to learn how to program games for a living.

Real programmers should be able to reproduce for themselves all of these routines and libraries of code that come with any system — and outperform them many times. Certainly it is this way if they want to become professionals. Professionals want "fat-free" code — code that is very optimized, and put together in the fastest, most economical way possible.

This sort of code is often the only real difference between a bad game and a great one.

NG: So you're saying that using these libraries is like, say, a supposed "master chef" simply heating up oven-ready meals — he's not really *making* anything. And your recommendation to someone who wants to turn programming into a profession is to learn how make their own libraries — and this means studying computer science and math?

Claude: Yes, because this way, you will fully understand the programming tools you purchase and use. You will have a full awareness of what a tool can do, and sometimes maybe you can actually bypass some of its functions and do something great. Pens you can buy anywhere, but not all of us can write poetry. Do you see what I mean?

NG: Presumably, you also need to know your computer languages well...

Claude: Obviously, you need to know your computer languages perfectly because that is the only way in which you can talk to the hardware — and this is at the heart of what you are doing. If you are talking inadequately, you immediately have a handicap.

NG: And study of computer science will help you understand how these languages work?

Claude: You need to know all your devices — all your IO boards, all you interrupts, all of what makes up the computer you're working with — in order to be able to drive the machine at the lowest level possible. You don't want to pile up too many translators between yourself and the hardware because they will slow you down.

"Pens you can buy anywhere, but not all of us can write poetry..."

NG: What other disciplines should potential games programmers study?

Claude: Physics is also important.

NG: Why *physics*?

Claude: Because most of the time games are an interactive simulation of the real world. The real world is governed by the laws of physics — gravity, motion dynamics, wave optics, and so on. And these have to be understood by the person who is trying to create that simulation.

NG: So once a budding game programmer has a great idea, has studied all he needs to study, and is about to embark on making a game, what common mistakes is he likely to make?

"If you wish to simulate the real world, then you need to understand how the real world works — and that means physics"

Claude: I believe that the biggest mistake would be not approaching a professional game company! Many game programmers forget that the best productions are usually the result of teamwork, and that a established devlopment company can offer tremendous support.

I have this problem with my students. We beg them to come to school, to do all their work at school, and to team up with other students. We beg them. And yet we have all these students who are rich enough to get their own computers — and they do their homework at home. They disappear during the evenings, they don't share information with the others, and they think they are doing the right thing. But when they come and face the results of the group, they realize how weak their project is.

The secret is teamwork...

NG: So you advise *Yarouze* users to team up?



Claude: I think they should organize themselves into a team with various capabilities and various talents and act as if they were a company. Put things into perspective — their charts and goals. And do a study of who would buy the game they plan to make and why would they buy it. The next thing you know, they are doing what every game producer does.

NG: So you don't see any new solo videogame "stars" emerging from the *Yarouze* project?

Claude: Well, it will make us more aware of who is out there — it "gives the mike" to some new people — but the 1980s era when one person could make a hit game by himself is long gone. These days games cost in the millions of dollars to produce — and no investor is going to give this money to one guy working from his bedroom. In 1996, a game will probably employ 10 to 15 people, working for one or two years.

NG: So you think *Yarouze* is a bad idea?

Claude: No, of course not. And a lot of amateur talent will be discovered this way.

But we must not give the impression that *Yarouze*, or any solo solution is like a pill that can be bought off the shelf for solving a headache or something. Game development requires lots of people in this day and age, and at Digipen we emphasize that this is not a solo adventure. It is no longer an affair where in a basement where you can solve all the problems on your own.

Selling the big idea

NG: But surely someone could come up with a good idea on their own in their bedroom?

Claude: Of course, you could come up with a good idea — but you'd still need the support of a major corporation to back you up in order for you to produce it.

NG: So if someone does come up with a great idea, should they present it to an established software publisher?

Claude: Absolutely. Unless this person is heir to a humongous fortune...

NG: And how should the game publisher be approached?

Claude: If someone is in possession of a good idea, I would recommend that they keep it very confidential — publishers don't like games everyone knows about. The publisher also needs to know that the idea is genuine and does not contain material that is subject to lawsuits.

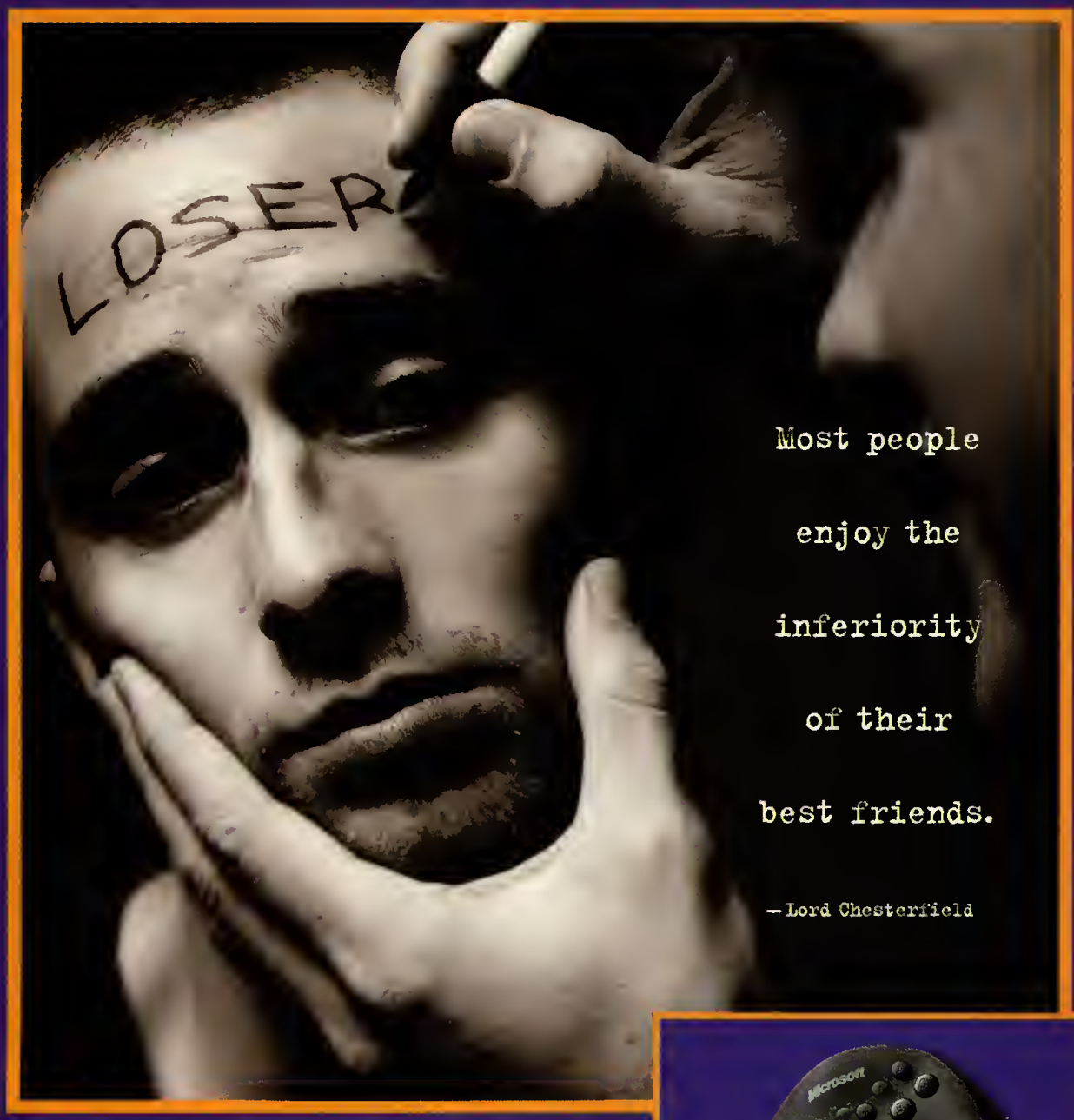
And if the publisher says, "No, it is not something that I would like to produce," then they should actually listen carefully and not get personal or angry. But ask themselves, "Why does this person not want to put in the money?" People might realize that they misjudged the value of their side of the story. If you are a person that is constantly misunderstood by the population of publishers, then maybe that should be a message to you that maybe you're not answering their need.

If the publisher says "Yes," however, then you're in luck.

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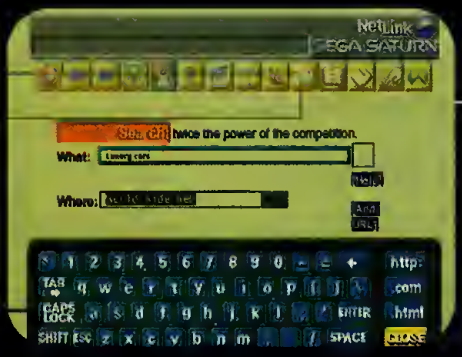
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PlayStation Expo: Sony shows off in Japan

One month before Nintendo's famous Shoshinkai expo, Sony shows that 32-bit is king of the hill. For now...

PlayStation Expo, held early in November, and Sony's answer to Nintendo's annual Shoshinkai exposition (held each year around Thanksgiving) was a resounding success for the company, showing that 32-bit is still alive and very much kicking. PlayStation Expo dwarfed the "E3 Tokyo" show (held next door) and demonstrated that PlayStation game development, more than just continuing at a strong pace, is also growing in terms of innovation and diversity.

The show, which was open to the public on the last three days, had attendance estimated at over 70,000 in a space maybe 10% the size of last year's E3 in Los Angeles (which had the same number of attendees), with some gamers waiting in a two-hour line to get in the front door, followed promptly by a two-hour wait to get in Square's exceptionally popular booth. **Next Generation** was at the show; here's a rundown of what impressed us most.

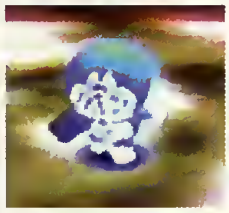




Sony's method for attracting attention to its *F1* game was not exactly subtle (above). The show was well attended, although this picture shows the calm before the storm at the registration desks (a line thousands long waited patiently outside)







***Armored Core* looked sharp, as did the RPG *Bounty First Sword*. *Doraemon* was the only N64 game shown at neighboring E3 Japan**

Most exciting on the hardware front was Sony's new dual joystick analog pad. Displayed under glass, it features two analog sticks, which also function as buttons. An **NG** representative was one of only a few attendees allowed to test it — and it feels great. The pad also has a solenoid-driven feedback mechanism. It isn't nearly as sophisticated as the technology behind Immersion's force-feedback stick (to be brought to market this year by CH Products), but it should add a nice kick (pun intended) to many types of games.

There were a number of interesting developments and surprises on the software front, but none as amazing as *Sangoku Musou*, KOEI's new 3D fighting game, which was developed by Omega-Force. KOEI, as most readers will know, has a well-deserved reputation as a publisher of high quality, complex, dry, historical simulation games. Thus the surprise at finding a 3D weapons-only combat game (that bears more than a passing resemblance to *Soul Edge*) at KOEI's stand. The game runs at 60 FPS and has a blocking system as complex as its attack system, which adds a great feeling of authenticity to the sword fighting which makes up the largest part of the game. With nice models and lightning fast speed, this could be a serious challenger to



Crash has been slightly "anime-ized" for Japan's oniqee gaming tastes. Who said success wouldn't change him?

PaRappa the Rapper, a whimsical rapping game, is one of the strangest, (and most fun) 32-bit titles to date

Bushido Blade (which has slipped and was not playable at the show) and *Soul Edge* in the weapons fighting category. The game was definitely the surprise of the show (see Alphas, page 89, this issue).

Sony itself was showing a fully localized *Crash Bandicoot* that features no roman characters or other information to reveal that it was originally an American game (the credits, with their Anglo names, do not appear until the game is solved). It was well received by Japanese gamers and was the focal point of the Sony booth, which featured a giant boulder rolling over the heads of attendees every five minutes or so.

Also big news at the Sony booth was *PaRappa the Rapper*, a whimsical rapping game that is one of the strangest, and most fun, PlayStation games to date. Sony was also showing a mediocre weapons fighting game of its own, based on a popular Manga license; Psygnosis's *F-1*, complete with an F-1 car and glamorous models to draw in the crowds; and *Depth*, an Aquanaut's Holiday-style undersea exploration title with "gameplay" that consists mainly of discovering new ways to remix the ambient soundtrack. Weird, but fun.

Sony was also pushing *Arc the Lad II*, which is supposed to be far better than its extremely short predecessor. The game generated quite a bit of excitement among gamers in Akihabara, Tokyo's electronics district, when it was released the weekend after the show. Among Sony's also-rans include a couple of RPGs and a puzzle game, *Intelligent Cube* — which were shown on videotape only. Conspicuous by its absence was *WipeOut XL*, which was shown on only one monitor. *Destruction Derby 2* was nowhere to be found.







Nemco was out in force, with huge Pac-people surveying the crowds. *Assault Suit Lynos* wee the moat impressive Saturn title at E3 , and the Assault Suit (above) wes much cooler than Cepcom's Rock Men (top)

Namco was showing an excellent conversion of *Soul Edge*, another solid *Ridge Racer* sequel, as well as *Xevious 3D*, *Ace Combat 2*, and *Time Crisis*, which uses a new Namco created light-gun that is accurate to 1 pixel (it attaches to the AV port as well as the joypad port, so it can cross check the signal it gets from the TV with the signal output from PlayStation). The *Time Crisis* gun, sadly, lacks the feedback of Sony's analog pad.

Bandai impressed with a new *Macross* title, *Macross Digital Mission VF-X*. The mech/flying game looked good though it was not quite complete. Bandai was also showing very early versions of *Battle Sabers*, a 3D fighting game, and *Metal Dread*, a *Doom*-style Mech game, but it was *Macross* that drew the crowds to the booth.

From Software presented *Armored Core*, a solid looking over-the-shoulder Mech game, as well as revealing an adventure/RPG, *Shadow Tower* — the latest installment in the *King's Field* series. Meanwhile, *Ranma 1/2* has made it into the 3D fighting world with *Battle Ranma 1/2 Renaissance*, from Rumic Soft. The game will ship in Japan just in time for the holidays.

Square's booth was impressive to the crowds of kids waiting to see its video presentation, but beyond some splashy graphics, not much was shown beyond what was available on the *Tobal No. 1*

STOP press

Sega sweetens Saturn
As anticipated, Sega has taken an aggressive move to sweeten Saturn by bundling *Daytona USA*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, and *Virtua Cop* with the Saturn pack. It will also include a mail-in coupon worth $5 off one or $15 off two third-party Saturn games. The offer will run from November 18 through December 31.

"We're pulling out all the stops for this holiday," offered Ted Hoff, Sega's executive VP. Whether it will be enough to fend off PlayStation and Nintendo 64 — and whether it's the last incentive from Sega. $149 anyone? — remains to be seen.

Virtua Fighter* versus *Fighting Vipers?
Yu Suzuki has taken the wraps off a new Saturn game from AM2. Slated for a Japanese release just before Christmas, *Fighters MegaMix* will star *Virtua Fighter* and *Fighting Vipers* characters — as well as some cameos from the cast of *Virtua Cop*.

There's no news yet of a U.S. release, but you can guarantee that Sega of America are looking forward to making a big deal of it.

Capcom's Nintendo 64 secrets revealed
Capcom is preparing a 1997 entrance into the Nintendo 64 sector. Its first N64 release will be *Street Fighter EX*, followed closely by *Mega Man 64*. Additionally, the firm is debating *Street Fighter Alpha Heroes* — a game which would feature a pantheon of characters from the *Street Fighter 2* universe.

breaking



Sony's force-feedback enelog pad was certainly the hit of the show, but the software on display looked great too. An impressive number of sequels were displayed, including Tomy's *New Japan Pro Wrestling 2*



demo disk. *Final Fantasy* has slipped to January, and *Bushido Blade* has slipped as well, with no release date set (and only about five new seconds of game footage shown). The company has started a publishing label, Aques, and was showing off *Super Line Stadium*, a fairly cutesy polygonal baseball game; *Grand Championship Rally*, a sharp looking rally game; and, strangely, a "professional" (no naked girls) *Mah-Jong* game.

Glams Inc., a small developer, was showing off *Quovadis*, a character-heavy strategic space combat title that was notable for having characters designed by Haruhiko Mikimoto, creator of the *Macross* characters.

Victor Interactive showed *Tomb Raider*, but it strangely didn't attract much attention from the attendees (perhaps Lara Croft needs to go to see whoever did Crash Bandicoot's Japanese makeover artist). Victor also showed a good-looking flight combat sim, *Wing Over*, and a port of the Saturn title *Center Ring Boxing*, renamed *The King of Boxing*.

Disappointingly, Capcom pulled *Resident Evil 2* at the last minute, leaving little except *Rock Man 8*, *Puzzle Fighter 2*, and *Star Gladiator*. Instead, Genki's *Beltlogger 9*, a Mech *Doom*-clone and *Drift King 2* drew big crowds (or maybe it was just the "Genki Girls" — it was hard to tell).

Konami's booth, with five entrances and only one exit, was always crowded. Most impressive was *Metal Gear*, an espionage adventure game, and *Winning Eleven '97 Soccer*. The amount of hysteria over *Tokimeki*, Konami's "girlfriend simulator," was immense. Konami was even selling some interesting *Tokimeki* merchandise, including a *Tokimeki* AV adapter for television sets.

Art Dink's latest was typical — a totally innovative, original concept that works well as game. You build your own characters with supplied building blocks and then use them to go through various levels. It looks like a kiddy game, but as always, there is a serious amount of depth in the title. The show's weird award, however, goes not to Art Dink, but to Sacom, for *Running High*. It's a racing game without cars, just various characters running. Bizarre.

Overall, the show, while occupying a small physical space, showed off an impressive number of original titles, and judging from the positive reaction of the crowd, PlayStation should have a good holiday season in Japan. And as for next-door's E3 Tokyo? Sad and tiny. *Assault Suit Leynos 2* was the biggest stand-out in a sea of mediocre edutainment and *Myst* clones.

ng

The show's weird award goes to Sacom's racing game: It has no cars, just various characters running



Drift King **(top left) and** ***Beltlogger*** **(above) look good, but the big surprise KOEI's surprise fighter** ***Sangoku Musou*** **(top right), previewed on page 89**

Crib sheet

Stuff every gamer should know. This month, on a role:

No.7 RPGs

So what do those letters stand for? Role Playing Game, it's a holdover from pen-and-paper games like *Dungeons & Dragons*.
What kind of games are they? The name actually refers to two very different kinds of games, depending in part on whether one refers to console RPGs or PC RPGs.
What's the difference? Console RPGs come almost exclusively from Japan, where they're the single most popular genre. Games like Square's *Final Fantasy* series favor long, linear stories and dozens of characters, with puzzles and combat serving merely to advance to the next event in the story. In fact they're even referred to as "interactive novels."
And PC RPGs? These tend to originate in the U.S. and, as in *Daggerfall*, players often get to choose most of their character's attributes. The games are often played in real time and focus more on accomplishing tasks with an eye towards a single, overall goal, but no set plotline.
Which is better? It's not a matter of "better;" the linear nature of console RPGs is restrictive, but it enables some wonderful storytelling. The open-ended variety of PC RPGs is appealing, but often leaves the games dry.
So what's a graphic adventure? Maybe next time...



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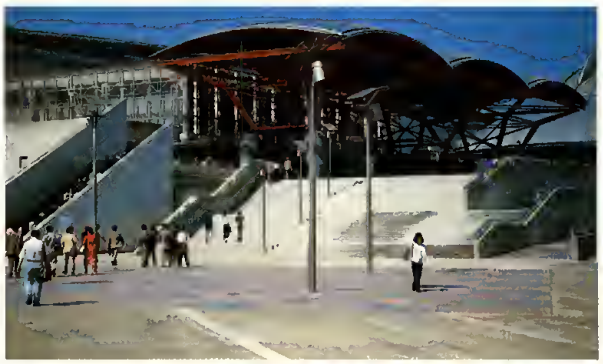
MIDWAY

JAMMA 96: Konami joins coin-op's elite

"Five million polygons per second" Cobra arcade board leads Konami's renaissance

Sega AM1's *Wave Runner* competes against Namco's *Jet Ski*, and is the most realistic arcade jet ski game yet

For anyone needing proof that rivalry is capable of stifling creativity, this year's JAMMA show more than qualifies. Namco and Sega, engaged in bitter feud, failed to show anything new, whereas Capcom and Konami, free of antagonism, had new coin-ops and hardware to reveal. Apart from a few welcome bouts of innovation, racing games once again dominated the show. This year an influx of ski games challenged the monopoly usually enjoyed by titles involving sports cars.



Sega's big deal was an almost complete version of *Virtua Fighter 3*. It seems beginners can enjoy it without knowing all the special moves, whereas experienced *VF* combatants can employ their current skills. Next to *VF3*, Tetsuya Mizuguchi presented *Sega Touring Car Championship*, the first game from Sega's AM Annex. The game is more technical than most racing coin-ops, with pit stops to add realism. Players must place on the start-up grid; they get an extra track if they come in first. In line with the game's realism, all four selectable cars have different handling styles. The game proved popular with JAMMA crowds, even though touring cars are a minority interest in Japan.

Sega's only new game was AM1's *Super Giant Slalom*, designed to compete with Namco's successful *Alpine Racer*. The graphics were impressive, with one memorable level raced down a torch-lit piste. Also from AM1 was *Wave Runner*, this time in the burgeoning, yet already flooded, water sports genre. This is perhaps the best jet ski game with a great cabinet, unmatched realism, and new gameplay features.

AM3 was absent, but staff promised two new titles for the AOU show next February. *Ski Rally* anyone?





JAMMA takes place in the huge Mekuhari Messe venue, outside Tokyo. *VF3* and Cobra dominated the show

Namco managed to disappoint almost everyone by not presenting its expected System 33 board. However, it did show off *Tokyo War* for the second year.

Aqua Jet supplied the first of the important new Namco titles. Visually, it is the best of the water ski bunch and the gameplay is based on jumping rather than racing.

Alpine Surfer 2 has added polygon backgrounds, more detailed runs (tunnels, towns at night), and a link-up option. Players choose from three skiers with contrasting styles.

Konami's *GTI Club Cote d'Azur* may look like any other car racing game, but it is loaded with innovative







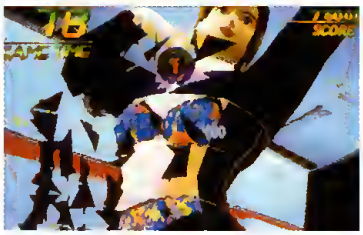




Konami's *GTI CLub Cote d'Azur* wee one of the most interesting games of the show (left and above, left). *Winding Heat* (above, middle) le more traditional than *GTI. Solar Assault* (above, right) wee presented in two cabinets: regular end deluxe







***Aqua Jet* (above) is graphically the best of the water race titles. Mastering jumping skills is the most important aspect of the game. Namco's *Dancing Eyes* is a thoroughly strange System 11 puzzle game**

touches. Konami also introduced *Winding Heat*, a more traditional racing coin-op offering 14 different cars, three courses, and various play modes. *Solar Assault* is a 3D *Gradius* with multi-directional scrolling.

The big news for Konami was the unveiling of its new graphics board — the Cobra — developed in conjunction with IBM. With a main CPU based on IBM's Power PC 603, the board is allegedly capable of dealing with between one and five million polygons per second, making it more powerful than Model 3. Plus, it allows a high-res image of 1,280x1,024 pixels.

Konami presented a demo of a fighting game known only as *PF73 Project*. Although it was an early version, the game was impressive enough to stir up much curiosity about itself and the board it was running on.







Street Fighter 3 was only present as a rolling video demo. At the moment it looks very similar to *SFII*, but with four new characters. Capcom wants to concentrate on *Street Fighter EX*, which retains *SFII*'s six-button system and linear gameplay, but includes polygon fighters. It seems there's plenty of life in the old *SF* yet.

Another big attraction was Capcom's fantasy fighter *Red Earth*, the first game to run on the new CPS III board. Combatants are well designed, and play is progressive, allowing fighters to gain experience throughout the game.

The self-explanatory *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* drew crowds and boasted a newish feature, Variable Heroes Battle, which enables players to switch between different fighters. It will even be possible to change the fighter during a special attack.

With its linkable beat-'em-up, *Mizuna Encounter Super Tag Battle*, SNK stood out among the also rans. This game utilizes the tag concept (as seen in *X-Men vs SF*) but only lets players do it when their characters are in certain sections of the screen. There is also a link-up option. SNK also presented *Neo Bomberman* by Hudson which offers two, two-player modes (cooperative and battle) and weapons to pick up.

Taito presented *Fighters Impact*, *Puzzle Bobble 3* (30 stages, 560 different maps), and a demo of horizontal shoot-'em-up *Darius G* boasting polygon spacecraft. Atlus had two beat-'em-ups in its booth: *SF*-clone *Groove on Fight* (using the ST-V board) and Model 2 title, *Ultimate Domain*, which featured great polygon fighters and gameplay that married *VF*-style fighting with *Tekken*'s attacks.

To conclude, the big trends of JAMMA '96 were linked cabinets, tag-team beat-'em-ups, and ski games. Konami stole the show; Capcom was second and proved 2D games can still compete in a 3D marketplace — at least for now. ng



Capcom showed a plethora of fighters, including three *Street Fighter* titles. *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* was popular, but where's *Street Fighter 3*?

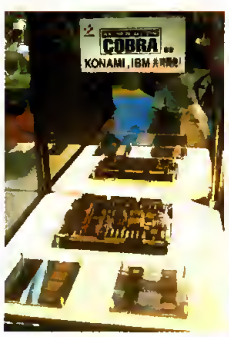
What is it?

The self-replicating phenomena was invented by lonely, anti-social computer hackers in the early eighties. Despite being only a few lines of code, this entity panicked computer users. No one was safe

Konami's Cobra stats

As with all modern hardware releases, Konami has released a mass of statistics to hype its new arcade board. Of course, in real terms the proof is in the pudding and stats mean nothing without the backing of some quality games. But here they are:

- **One to five million polygons per second**
- **50 to 250 million pixels per second**
- **A resolution of 640x480 to 1,280x1,024**
- **Sub-pixel anti-aliasing**
- **Gouraud shading as standard**
- **Parallel lights, and "environment" lights**
- **Perspective mapping and environment mapping**



Fall ECTS: Europe's top videogame show

European gamers still don't have N64, giving Sony the opportunity to shine brightly

It is...

The computer virus which recently received an unexpected PR boost when Jeff Goldblum used one to foil the invading aliens in *ID4*. Luckily, the spindly creature's main computer was Mac compatible

Nintendo won't launch the Nintendo 64 in Europe until March of 1997. The company feels that it needs to concentrate on the three most important territories (Japan, North America, and Europe) individually, and in order of strategic importance. Hence, earlier this fall, European game developers and publishers treaded their mostly 32-bit wares to a packed Olympia, London, seemingly oblivious to the looming 64-bit era, in what may well prove to be the last E.C.T.S. (European Computer Trade Show) dominated by Sony, Sega, and the age of 32-bit.

However, this definitely did not look like a PlayStation and Saturn close-out sale. The event was Europe's biggest yet with plenty of new titles (for Europe, at least) on offer. On entering Olympia, **Next Generation** first noticed the impressively large stand of Acclaim, a company that was riding high just a few years ago, but now needs to show that after the aquisition of Probe, Iguana, and Sculptured Software, it's still a force to be reckoned with.

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter was a nice start, and seemingly the show's only N64 game. Although the game looks like a relatively competent *Quake* clone, it is perhaps symbolic of Nintendo's disregard for the European market that this third-party product should be showcasing the N64 singlehandedly.

As is customary, Virgin had a huge theme stand: The Virgin Brotherhood, complete with an imposing monk at the entrance. Virgin is riding high as Europe's biggest publisher — and it's not keeping quiet about it. Having the European rights to titles such as *Resident Evil* and the entire LucasArts library has helped build Virgin's empire, and it doesn't look like it's letting go — despite the moneypit that is *Heart of Darkness*.

EA delighted the public with *Soviet Strike*, and — having signed up *World Cup '98* — it comes as no surprise that *FIFA '97* was showcased also. *NHL '97*, *NBA Live '97*, and *Madden NFL '97* completed its sports line up.

Eidos made its ECTS debut (the new company is the result of a merger between Domark and U.S. Gold, among others) with an impressive stand, attracting lots of visitors — although it is unclear whether the flocks of male viewers were there to see the games or the Lara Croft-alike *Tomb Raider* babes who sauntered around the stand. Having spent wisely on development studios in the past year, Eidos is no doubt awaiting what it sees as its rightful place in the premier league of publishers. *Tomb Raider* and Eidos' own *Deathtrap Dungeon* led the charge, with support from *CrimeWave* on the Saturn, and *Full On F1*, a promising race game on the PC.

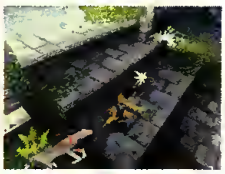
Sega also relied on *Tomb Raider* to wow the crowds, along with Scavenger's ever-dependeable crowd-pleasers *Scorcher* and *Amok*. *Nights* was presented just a week before its European release, along with *Virtua Kids*, *Fighting Vipers*, and *Daytona USA Championship*.

Sony's presence included a great

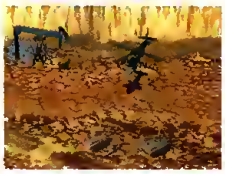


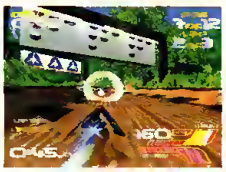
Once again, the PlayStation banner dominated London's Olympia showroom, and a WW1 fighter plane only slightly obscured it











Top to bottom: *Tomb Raider* was everywhere, *Nights* impressed Saturn owners, *Soviet Strike* gave EA a break from Sports, and *Wipeout XL* looked dangerous. *Screamer 2* (above left) was also well received

It's clear that European gamers aren't tired of 32-bit, and that Nintendo has further to catch up than ever before

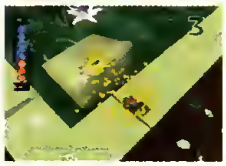


Virgin rejected the simplicity of the traditional tradeshow "booth," and instead opted for building a cathedral for visitors. And why not?

array of quality titles with *Wipeout 2097*, *Destruction Derby 2*, *F1*, and *Crash Bandicoot* drawing in the crowds. Also, *Tekken 2* didn't disappoint (despite running 17.5% slower than the U.S. version after being converted to the European PAL TV standard).

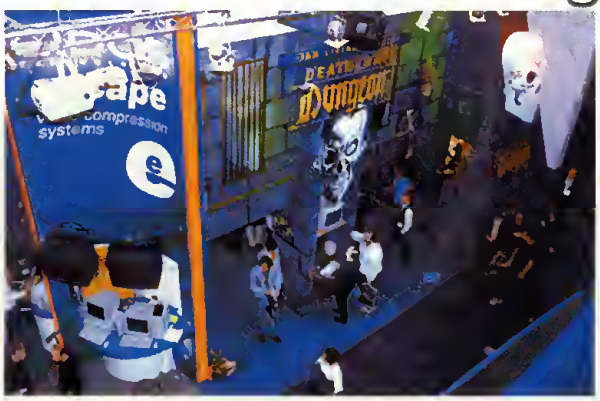
Interplay's purchase of Shiny Entertainment was undeniably smart, but questions still remain over Shiny's 32-bit ability. *MDK* was on show, albeit with Shiny staff on hand to explain away the all too easily found bugs. Meanwhile, the ever-so-British CodeMasters had a compact but bijou stand. The occasional flashes of brilliance continued with *Micro Machines 3* looking excellent.





***Destruction Derby 2* (top) and *Micro Machines 3* (above) show that the U.K. is a strong 32-bit force**

In conclusion, the lack of a 64-bit presence was worrying. But with such strong 32-bit titles on show, it was clear that European gamers will have much to occupy them until next spring, and that Nintendo will have to make up more lost ground than ever before. ng



Eidos managed to stop themselves from letting the enticipated unveiling of Ian Livingstone'n promising new title remain too low-key

In the studio

A look behind the doors of game developers around the world...

Major League Soccer (MLS) stars **Eric Wynalda** and **Alexi Lalas** are set to assist BMG in the development of its forthcoming soccer game, set for release for PlayStation and Saturn in 1997.

The best of both worlds? Hipnotic Interactive (a new game development company, formed by two ***Duke Nukem 3D*** programmers) has been commissioned by Id to create ***Rift***, an add-on sequel to ***Quake***. The game comprises 15 new levels, three new weapons, two new monsters, and one new boss. It should ship in the first quarter of 1997.



Despite Trip Hawkins's claims in NG 22 that "I don't believe that PlayStation is going to extend far enough into the future," **The 3DO Company** has announced that it has started developing PlayStation games.

3DO's hand was forced slightly by the purchase of New World Computing, which had already embarked on PlayStation development. But Studio 3DO chief Bob Lindsey says the company will also begin an in-house development schedule, commenting that "Although the worldwide installed base is probably about half what Sony have calculated, there is a useful base there." The company has no plans to develop for Saturn.



Sega of America will bring ***Saturn Bomberman*** to U.S. stores early next year. The ten-player Hudson game will be altered to incorporate NetLink capabilities, enabling online multiplayer games. This is good news.

Square has announced a new Japanese sports label. Aques, which stands for Advanced Quality Entertainment and Sports, will release ***Pro Logic Mahjong*** (a mahjong title) and ***Super Live Stadium*** (a baseball title featuring super-deformed players and most of the major Japanese teams) in Japan on December 20th.

Grand Champion's Rally (predicted by many to be PlayStation's answer to ***Sega Rally***) will appear early in the U.S. and Japan sometime in 1997.

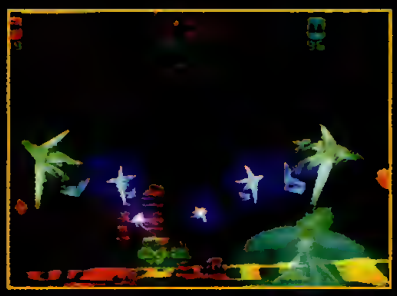


Cruis'n USA creator Eugene Jarvis (interviewed in NG21) has hit out at Nintendo for cutting the scenes of Bill and Hillary Clinton in a hot tub, and scenes in which players can run down animals, from the N64 version. Jarvis stormed: "It seems like they don't have a sense of humor. I don't know what's wrong with these people."

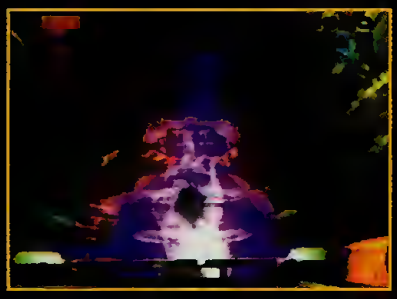
In an exclusive interview with n64.com (NG's sister web site, dedicated exclusively to coverage of the Nintendo 64) ***ClayFighter 3*** creator Jeremy Airey reveals details of Interplay's forthcoming N64 fighter.

"I won't say who did the stop-motion clay work on ***ClayFighter 2***, but let's just say that it was horrendous," he begins. "But Danger Productions, the company who developed the first ***ClayFighter*** stop-motion, re-did their work for us on ***ClayFighter 3*** and the look is phenomenal. ***ClayFighter 3*** is what the original ***ClayFighter*** was supposed to be," he concludes. "Finally, there is a machine and the tools along with it to develop the game the way it was initially envisioned. I only wish that N64 had a CD-ROM drive."

ClayFighter 3 is due for launch in the first half of 1997, and looks set to feature new characters, and 3D interactive backgrounds.



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K-A
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underground.

faster than fear.
you have become
one with your war
machine.

flesh sears.
metal warps.

darkness enfolds you.
the tunnel has
swallowed you whole.

it is alive with the
instruments of
death.

even the walls
want to kill you.
the speed hurts.

trigger finger
blisters.

no turning back.
welcome to your
tomb.

TUNNEL B1

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PS Extreme

"One of the most visually stimulating games to come out for a 32-bit system."
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Arcadia

All the latest arcade and coin-op news

by **Marcus Webb**

Marcus Webb is the editor-in-chief of *RePlay* magazine, the US' leading trade amusement magazine



Konami & IBM Eclipse Sega's **Model 3**

Maybe there's more than one way to skin that PC cat: Giant Japanese videogame pioneer Konami says it's ready to give Sega and Namco a run for their money in the video graphics department, thanks to its new Cobra videogame platform. Created with IBM Japan, Cobra can process up to five million polygons per second.

The first videogame using Cobra will be a fighter. American gamers won't see it until spring of '97, though Japan could see it a bit sooner. "Arcadia" saw a preview of Cobra's visual effects including ultra-realistic depictions of rain, fire, water, wind, fog, and snow (individual snowflakes visibly melt!). Cobra can also generate highly complex 3D settings, lighting, shading and character design and motion — all in real-time.

"IBM Japan designed the fundamental graphics architecture while Konami and IBM Japan jointly designed detailed computer graphics subsystems," says Konami. IBM's PowerPC and ASIC semiconductor technology, plus Konami's interactive amusement systems, were blended into the final package.

"Me Too" Syndrome

The mega-success of Sega's *Daytona* and Namco's *Alpine Racer* received close attention from the world's major coin-op makers. Now, in showbiz fashion, they have all scrambled to emulate the winners. That's why arcades now have a choice of six new deluxe driving simulators (from Sega, Konami, Jaleco, Williams, Atari, and Gaelco/Namco) and four jet ski simulators (from Sega, Namco, Konami, and Innovative Concepts).

Arcade owners are skeptical of the prices and long-term player appeal for these newer units. That's why you may have to search for a really high-end location like a Sega City or Dave & Buster's, to get a look at all of these titles. Same goes for Sega's *Virtua Fighter 3*, an awesome product that players will love — but one whose price sent some arcade people into sticker shock (it costs what a super-deluxe driving simulator used to cost, four years ago).

Acclaim Regroups

Despite weak reception for its coin-op titles in '96 (*Batman Forever* and *NBA Jam Extreme*), Acclaim remains determined to gain a foothold in the arcade market — whatever it takes.

The company recently ousted longtime president & CEO Robert Holmes (co-chair Greg Fischbach assumed his duties). Acclaim also pink-slipped over 60 staffers from its Long Island, N.Y. headquarters, while execs wisely held back from debuting any new coin-op videos at the arcade industry's fall trade shows for one very good reason: they weren't ready yet. But by now, a new Acclaim coin-op or two should be arriving.

Let's hope it learns from its mistakes.

Second **Coin-Op Network** Launched December 1

Williams/Bally-Midway, the Chicago-based creator of *Mortal Kombat*, began releasing network-capable versions of its *Touchmaster* countertop coin-ops on December 1.

These special units are equipped with modems and other technology that make them compatible with the National Amusement Network, Inc. (NANI) for interstate and national tournament play, advertising, discount coupon rewards, and more. Gamers will probably find more of these *Touchmasters* in pizza places and sports bars than in arcades — but heck, this is only the opening salvo in a campaign that could transform the entire coin-op video experience by this time next year. Look for a major nationwide arcade-based tournament on *Ms. Pac Man*, for example, courtesy of NANI.

In March, Viacom subsidiary Paramount will bring out NANI-ready universal cabinets for arcade use (and they may focus on using CD-ROM based games). NANI is negotiating with game designers and publishers to make PC titles available for the network. NANI is also asking these suppliers to create brand-new titles to debut, via NANI, in arcades. Some major announcements are expected in the coming weeks and months.

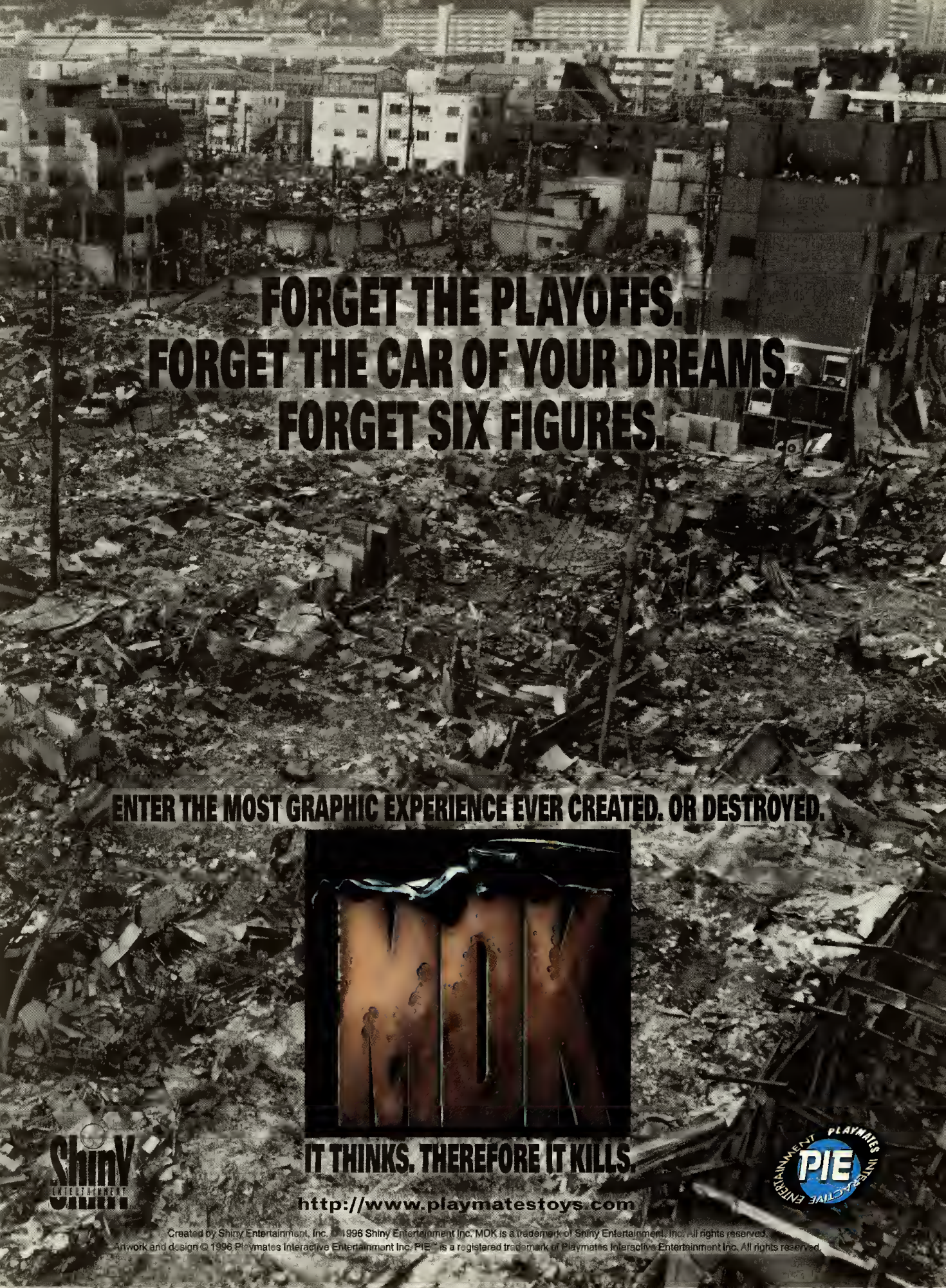
NANI is a corporation jointly owned by U.S. arcade owners and Canadian patent holder TVPhone Inc. So far, NANI has spent $6 million (at least) to perfect its arcade network system. We're hearing it may also be possible to compete in some NANI events from your home PC. More details in the future.

Microsoft Says: Expect PC-Based Coin-ops in '97

Microsoft director of coin-op marketing James Plamondon hosted various hardware, software, and component makers in November to work out common technical standards that will be used for getting PC- based coin-op games on the market.

Plamondon expects to see such games heading to arcades throughout 1997, but his push for this technology has stirred up controversy in the world of coin-op. Many traditional manufacturers sharply question whether CD-ROMs or other PC-based technology really have sufficient memory (and fast enough image generation) to support a top-of-the-line arcade hit.

Arcade owners, however — seeing a chance for standardized technology and amortized investments — are salivating over Microsoft's proposals. Microsoft, meanwhile, says its $2 billion annual R&D budget (not to mention the total R&D expenditures of the entire PC industry) cannot possibly be matched by any individual coin-op manufacturer. It has a point, but it's hard to see Namco, Sega, and (increasingly) Konami going down without a fight.



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movers & shakers

The business news that affects the games you play

by Christian Svensson

Christian Svensson is the assistant editor and webmaster at Next Generation Online which can be found at http://www.next-generation.com/



SONY AND THE BAD GUYS

NEWSLINE: Sony swooped on companies that advertise products it doesn't like — namely pirated games and the chips that enable PlayStation owners to play pirated games. Some half dozen outfits were named in lawsuits filed under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act.

BOTTOMLINE: But it's not all good guys versus bad guys. If Sony does manage to sweep these chips out of Amsrics, it will conveniently rid itself of ths grey imports hssdsche. Some companiss nsmed in the lswsuit claim they only sell the chips —which plsy import as well as pirate games — in order to fulfill ths American demand for legally imported games. Sony of Amsrica does not liks import games because, smong othsr reasons, the sales do not show up on the U.S. office's books.

EVER CHANGING WAYS

NEWSLINE: 3DO announced its intention to publish games for PlayStation. With the acquisition of New World earlier this year, the one-time hardware evangelist found itself owning semi-developed PlayStation games, which might just as well be completed. Studio 3DO said it would develop for PlayStation in-house.

BOTTOMLINE: This marks the latest shift in 3DO's trsnsformation into a fully fledgsd multi-format softwsre publisher. Each month Trip's gang sdds a new pistform to its roster and mskss lsss and lsss noiss about how ths various hsrdwsrs manufacturers ars making such s hash of ths industry. Ths only meinstreem exception thus far is Seturn. And perheps M2. 3DO cenned *Iron end Blood* emidst rumors of further M2 cancsiiations.

NINTENDO WALLOWS IN GLORY

NEWSLINE: Despite pre-arrival wamings, fumbles, and botches, N64 came, saw, and conquered. It commanded a 61% share of the next-generation hardware market for September, despite only being on sale for five days of the month.

BOTTOMLINE: The TRST figures which geve Nintendo such a commanding leed were more interesting in their treatment of the 32-bit club. PlayStation showed a respectable 28% of the merket. Sega could only menage 6%. These are the sort of figures now defunct herdwere pletforms were mansging not so long ago. Presumably, by the time this ertiele is printed, Sega will havs stunned the msrket with s Saturn-boosting pack-in or price-cut. Let's hope so.

WHAT A SURPRISE!

NEWSLINE: Still on Nintendo. No sooner had the first units of Nintendo sold out than the company sweetly announced that a further half a million machines were being flown over to fulfill the demand. And when it looked like these machines were going to sell quickly, another few hundred thousand appeared. Nintendo had managed to get 1.2 million machines into the country. Rather, more than the 500,000 it was predicting only three months before.

BOTTOMLINE: Taks your pick. Perhsps Nintendo's slow-down in Jepanese sales prior to ths U.S. launch was good, freeing up ell those extra mechines (though Nintsndo would nevsr sdmit such s thing). Psrhaps Nintendo's plsnning department is so conservativs that it thinks it csn msnufacture only e third of the mechines it can actuelly muster (though Nintsndo would never admit such a thing). Or perhaps Nintendo is building desire by making dire wemings of shortages that never actusily occur (though Nintendo would nsvsr admit such e thing).

WINNERS AND LOSERS

NEWSLINE: Acclaim informed Wall Street of some awful financial figures. Its final quarter for '96 shows $140 million in the red. And its year-end figures would be worse than anyone had expected. Lenders were duly informed of the consequences. Spectrum Holobyte, which had previously held the baton for industry's worst performing team, announced surprise profits for its fourth quarter. Boss Steve Race called it "great news."

BOTTOMLINE: Acclaim is still peying for its inability to rssd msrkst chsngss and too many copies of dismsl gsmes thst didn't ssll. But it hss reorgsnized internsily, updated its development strategy end brought decent games to market.

CHEESY VB EASY AT EB

NEWSLINE: EB gave Virtual Boy hardware away. Customers could swap three old PlayStation or Saturn games for a piece of the hardware. Software was being sold for a couple of bucks apiece.

BOTTOMLINE: Nintendo now knows how Sege felt with 32X...

> Abort training missions

...Aborting Command & Conquer
...Aborting Warcraft 2

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HYBRID

Gaming on the Internet

by Bernard Yee

Bernard Yee has contributed to *USA Today* and writes regularly for *PC Gamer*, *PC Magazine*, and has authored several books on gaming



Playing the online game: it's a tough job, but....

NG readers may think I have an easy job, testing out software, chatting with industry execs like Richard Garriott about *Ultima Online* or banging on the latest P200 Aptiva S system (am I spoiled by it? A resounding Yes!), and I'd have to agree. Sometimes I feel like Jeff Bridges in *The Fisher King*, as he says "Thank God I'm meee..." Of course, when my system crashes because of the botched DirectX 2 install, and I lose the last hour of changes I made to a 150-page report, I still feel like Jeff Bridges. But when he's contemplating suicide.

Indulge me a look through the diary of my online game week. The clock has just ticked past 9 am EST, and in the words of Tom Waits, I'm getting some visual insubordination from a double-knit character named Mr. Bandwidth. I've been on *Duke Nukem* 3D on Total Entertainment Network, and Mr. Bandwidth's just kicked me out of a game. Why? He's the latency monitor that tells me when my latency is so bad that *Duke* just won't be fun. That's strange, considering I have a 115k bps ISDN connection, and digital lines are supposed to reduce latency. So when the East Coast logs onto the Net with their T1 lines at work, things slow down. The TEN folks suggested I go through their ISP of choice, Concentric Network, but that sounds suspiciously like a proprietary service. What about the beauty of an open Internet?

Mplayer is my next destination, and I'm able to wrangle better performance out of Mpath's service, even during prime time Net usage hours. *Quake*'s the game, and I quickly get disemboweled by the *Quake* studs who know the game far better than I. I get bored with getting bored with life, and decide that I want to play a game that I know I can play — Activision's *MechWarrior 2*. But every time I start a game, it crashes. I finally find out from Mplayer's online support service that my ATI 3D version of *Mech 2* isn't supported, even though it is the full Win 95 *NetMech* game. Follow me here: Mplayer should be courting the serious gamer, who is likely to own a 3D hardware accelerator. The serious gamer will not be amused when his or her high end games aren't compatible with an online game service and will not waste hard drive space by installing the pedestrian version of *Mech 2*, when he could be using it for *Diablo* instead. I don't even own the DOS version of *Mech 2* anymore, so I can't go to DWANGO.

I headed off on Friday to get my fill of *Mech* mayhem with *Mech 2: Mercenaries*, and *MercNet*. I opened a PPP connection with my ISP, ran MERCPPP and then *MercNet*, took my Cauldron-Born and wiped out some guy with *a* much bigger (and slower) Warhawk, stopping to taunt him in the middle of combat. With five or less players, latency seemed OK, and the game ran gloriously in SVGA on the P200 Aptiva S. *MercNet*'s free, so I begin to wonder about the future of my friends at Mpath and TEN, but remind myself that the race has just begun, and there's still plenty of venture capital to keep these guys gainfully employed.

Feeling flush from my victories on *MercNet*, I log onto my *PC Magazine* editor's private *Quake* server after 9 p.m. Saturday, to meet up with him and a few other writers for some *Quake* deathmatches. I rode his rocket more times than I care to recount ("Your copy is late! Blam!"). The best part was how easy it was to open a connection with my ISP, run Q95.BAT and type in the server address. Latency is OK, but I get caught in a huge Net slowdown that requires logging off and back on.

Moving up the hardware ladder is smooth and rewarding — with a slick split design, my 200 MHz Aptiva is leaps and bounds faster than my P133, the 3Dfx card I added promises to addict me to *Tomb Raider* at 640x480 in 24-bit color. But moving your favorite games on to the Internet is still very much bleeding edge. Bring lots of Band-Aids, watch out for my Cauldron-Born, and go easy on me if you run into yours truly in *Duke* or *Quake*.

My point behind all this shameless anecdotal self-indulgence? Don't worry, I'm getting to one.

I'm *a* computer literate guy, with lots of high-end equipment — it's my job. I'm also pretty *au fait* with the way online gaming's technology works — this really *is* my job. And yet I'm having a hard time finding any fun out there, mainly because of hardware and compatibility hiccups.

OK, we all know that these are still "early days," but the danger is that the online gaming services will regard their set-ups as "good enough" and simply work on grabbing better content. My message to them is "Don't relax!" They've done a great job so far, but there's plenty further to go. ng

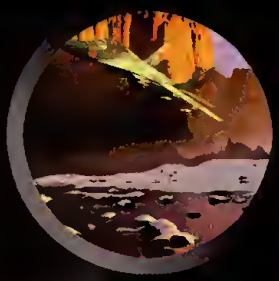
Data stream

We all know about the U.S. so let's look abroad. The amount Sony has spent on its pan-European PlayStation campaign: **$32 million**
Further amount they plan to spend by Christmas: **$64 million**
Sony's projected figures for number of European PlayStation owners by Christmas: **2 million**
Number of PlayStation games on sale in Europe by Christmas: **200**
Number of PC 3D Engine boards NEC plans to sell in its first three months: **150,000**
Number by the end of 1997: **500,000**
Average distance an adult can walk on the energy gained from one single chocolate chip: **150ft**
Number of chocolate chips need to walk around the world: **875,000**
PC shipments in Japan for 1995: **5.7 million**
Annual amount Americans spend on weight-reduction products: **$33billion**
Number of donuts sold by Dunkin' Donuts every minute: **3,055**
Number of times all the cans of Spam sold each year would circle the globe if put end to end: **10**
Amount of cans of Spam consumed every second in the US: **3.8**
Number of dust mites in a typical bed: **6 billion**
Number of pigs needed to play Babe in the movie of the same name: **48**
Average number of hours worked by NG staff rs per week on this issue: **70**
How much does this suck? **Lots**
But are we still singing? **You bet!**

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Datebook

December

Fall Internet World will happen December 10 to 13 at the Javits Convention Center, NY. Call Mecklermedia at (203) 341-2855.

January

The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) takes place in Las Vegas at the Las Vegas Convention Center. For more information, contact: Consumer Electronics Manufacturers Association, 2500 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3834 USA. For more information, call (703) 907-7600 or fax: (703) 907-7601. Visit the web page at http://www.eia.org/cema.

SGI and Seybold announce **World Movers: The VRML 2.0 Developers Conference.** The event will take place January 30 to 31 at the ANA Hotel in San Francisco, CA. Additional information can be found at http://worldmovers.org.

April

Computer Game Developer's Conference (CGDC) from April 25 to 29 will be at the Santa Clara Convention Center, Silicon Valley, CA. The show is for programmers, writers, producers, product managers, artists, musicians, and assorted supergeeks. Send your vitals (name, title, company name, address, and so on) to cgdc@mfi.com. To exhibit, call Gina Bovero at (415) 356-3406 or e-mail gbovero@mfi.com. Visit the web site at http://www. cgdc.com. To join the Computer Game Developer's Association, call (415) 948-CGDC or fax (415) 948-2744.

Seybold Seminers comes to New York. The Conference will be April 21 to 25; Expo will be April 23 to 25. Seybold New York will take place in the Javits Convention Center in Manhattan.

May

Multimedia 97 Exposition and Forum will take place May 6 to 9 at the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Canada. The show features five major components: Multimedia Communications, Virtual Reality World, VICOM, Showcase On Production, and Electronic Design. For more information, call (905) 660-2491, fax (905) 660-2492, or e-mail moreinfo@multimedia.ca. Official WWW-site: http://multimedia.magic.ca

June

The one and only **Electronic Entertainment Exposition** (aka **E3**) takes place in Atlanta on June 19 through June 21. Open to the public for one day. Visit http://www.mha.com/e3/ for more information on E3.

September

Seybold San Francisco: Conference is Sept 29 to October 3. Expo will be October 1 to 3.

SHOW ORGANIZERS: If your show isn't listed here it's because we simply don't know about it. Please fax us at (415) 468-4686; E-mail us at ngonline@imagine-inc.com; or write us at DateBook, **Next Generation**, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005.

GADGET

Peripherals, accessories, gizmos, add-ons, thingies, and stuff

NEC PowerPlayer

Price: $3,299
Manufacturer: NEC
System: PC



And now here's one from NEC. The PowerPlayer line was developed as a dedicated gaming PC. We tested the 2020 model, a 200 Mhz Pentium with 32 MB EDD RAM, a Monster 3D accelerator (3Dfx Voodoo graphics based), ATI 3D Rage graphics accelerator, 256K pipeline burst cache, 3.2GB HD, 33.6K internal voice/data/fax modem, and a 6x4 CD ROM changer, along with extras like a Thrustmaster Top Gun flightstick, Gravis GrIP multiport system with two GrIP pads, Advent satellite speakers with sub-woofer, and ten of the hottest games on the market (*C&C, Mechwarrior 2, WipeOut, Whiplash*) most of which are either ATI or 3Dfx enhanced. It also boasts a number of thoughtful features, most notably an infrared remote with which it's possible to control the entire machine. A pad on the remote even enables users to move the pointer on screen from across the room.

There are a couple of drawbacks: the system doesn't come with a set of Windows 95 discs (invaluable for fixing glitches), including only a mirror disc of the original factory setup. It's possible to replace individual files, but it doesn't provide the functionality of a dedicated Win95 installer. Also, the steep price doesn't include a monitor.

However, the system benchmarks impressively, and if you want to remove the guesswork from building a top-of-the-line gaming machine, the NEC PowerPlayer is definitely one to check out. As a side note, a 166 Pentium version with a slightly smaller hard drive is also available for $2,499.

Diamond 12X Multimedia Kit

System: PC
Manufacturer: Diamond Multimedia
Price: $349



Here comes Diamond with the first 12X CD-ROM. The IDE-based drive offers a screaming 1.8MB/sec data transfer with 130ms access time. The kit also includes Diamond's Soundblaster-compatible, 16-bit wavetable sound card, a set of powered speakers, and a small collection of software including a handful of games and Corel 4.

It performs extremely well, transferring data pretty much as advertised, although from rest it sometimes takes a hair too long to get up to speed, resulting in the occasional "Drive not ready" message even though the disc is in and the drive is spinning (clicking "Retry" was invariably successful). Also, the high output of the sound card can overdrive some speakers (not the ones included), and there's no mechanical volume control. But these are minor annoyances, and the sheer speed more than compensates. Until somebody comes up with a 16X (Heaven help us if they do), it's the fastest drive on the block.



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So welcome to the nightmare of Ramses' tomb. And enjoy your stay. It may last forever.

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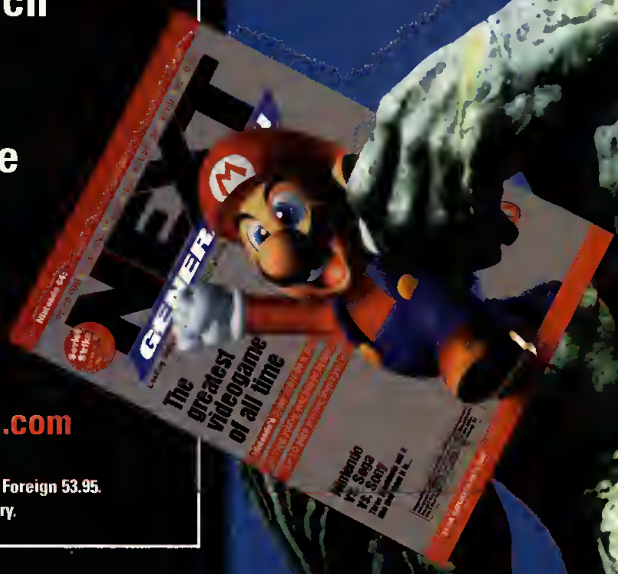
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CyberGladiators

TEEN T

k.a.a.

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Back Issues

25 issues of **Next Generation**. 25th December — a day for giving. Coincidence? Really? You think that something as spooky as that occurs just by chance? *Really?* We don't think so



NG 1 • 3DO's Trip Hawkins interviewed • A comprehensive look at all the next generation systems • The Violence Tapes: Four of the world's most controversial game developers in one virtual room



NG 2 • Shigeru Miyamoto (creator of *Mario*) interviewed • Saturn: The complete story so far• Gaming on the information superhighway (aka "Joyriding") • Revival of the Fittest: Why is retro gaming so big?



NG 3 • Sega's Tom Kalinske quizzed • Does PlayStation live up to the hype? • What's wrong with the PC? (part one) • Game music feature



NG 4 • Nolan Bushnell (the founder of Atari) interviewed • Atari: from boom to bust, boom again (and then bust again) • Gumpei Yokoi (inventor of Virtual Boy) quizzed • What's wrong with the PC? (part two)



NG 5 • Sony's Steve Race interviewed • Nintendo 64: The Story So Far • Apple: The Ripe Stuff. The story behind Apple's new "game" machine, the Pippin



NG 6 • Peter Molyneux (Bullfrog's leader) talks gameplay • M2: 3DO bites back? • PlayStation's Disciples: How PS-X games are made



NG 7 • Sam Tramiel: Atari talks back • 3DO: Past, Present, and Future. What has 3DO achieved so far, and what is its future? • Electronic Entertainment Exposition (E^3) — the definitive 1995 show report



NG 8 • Howard Lincoln: Why the hell has Nintendo delayed Ultra 64? • Sega Saturn: What the TV commercials don't tell you • Japanese RPGs: coming to a game machine near you

NG 9 • So which 32-bit system is EA on? An interview with EA's Bing Gordon • Reality Check: The Future of Virtual Reality • Saturn: Sega's battle plan to attract developers

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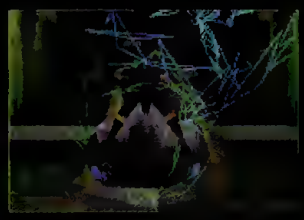
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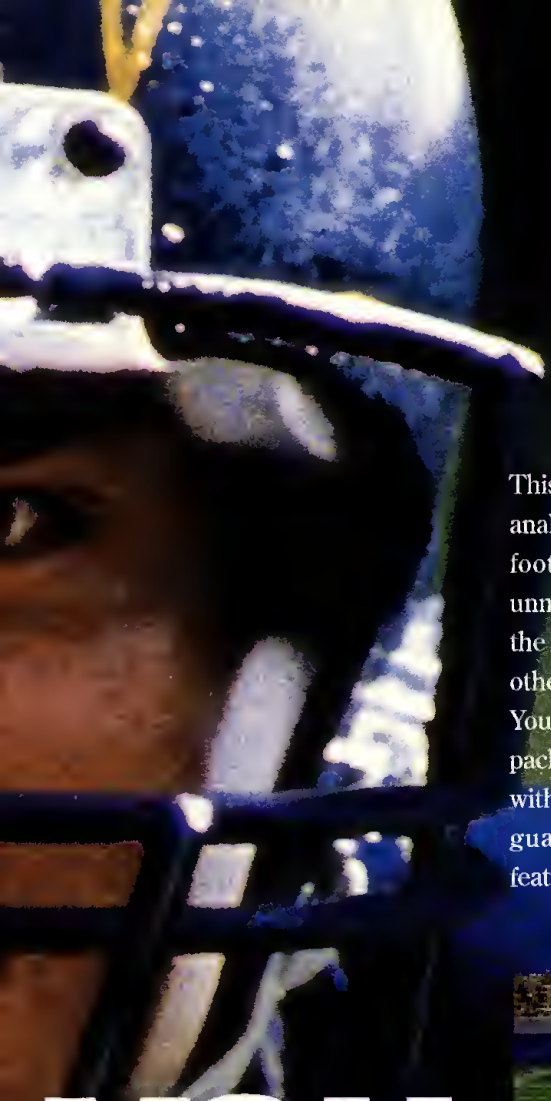
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PlayStation



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Sony plans to reintroduce the pioneering spirit of game development's "good old days" with a $750 PlayStation development system that lets *you* make your own games. A Next Generation exclusive

Sometime in the first quarter of 1997, Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA) will introduce a new product into the U.S. market called *Yarouze*. Available only from Sony, it will cost around $750 (final pricing has yet to be set) and contain a special black PlayStation, a serial cable for connecting the system to a PC or Mac, and a CD filled with PlayStation programming libraries, a C compiler and debugger, and other development tools. For the first time ever, consumers will be able to program their own games for a console system. If you don't realize what an important development this is, you probably shouldn't be reading this magazine.

Over the next 10 pages, **Next Generation** will present the first English language, in-depth report on the system. What it is, how the *Yarouze* program will work, and what it means for gamers and the industry as a whole. As a service to our readers (many of whom will no doubt order a system as soon as possible) we have also included tips on game design issues from the pros. Enjoy...


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What's the **big deal** anyway?

Sony wants to return some of 1997's game development back to the way it was 15 years ago, an age when gamers made games themselves, for themselves. It's a decision that could save the industry — and turn some kids into programming stars

Yarouze — a Japanese word that roughly translates to "let's do it!" is one of the most significant developments in the game industry in years. This innovative program, conceived by PlayStation creator Ken Kutaragi, will, for the first time, allow enthusiasts to create their own console games.

Released in Japan in late 1996, it will ship in the United States sometime in the first quarter of 1997 (a release date was not set at press time). Basically, *Yarouze* is a program that includes software for PC (or Mac), hardware in the form of a specially modified, black PlayStation, and membership of a development club that takes the form of a private Internet website. With *Yarouze*, hobbyists can create software for PlayStation for under a thousand dollars. No official price point has been set in the U.S., but **Next Generation** expects the system to sell for about $750.









These efforts from the *Yarouze* program in Japan are very impressive for first-generation titles. Sure, they're mostly 3D shooters (always a shareware favorite), with the odd puzzler thrown in for good measure, but compared to most PC shareware efforts, they look great

The CD that comes with *Yarouze* contains a C compiler, a debugger, tools for converting graphic and sound files to PlayStation format, and the PlayStation development C libranes — the same libraries that make developing for PlayStation so much easier than for Saturn, Nintendo 64, or even PC.

The system is not quite as robust as the professional level PlayStation development system. Any software created for *Yarouze* must fit entirely in the PlayStation's 3.5MB of RAM (2MB main RAM, 1MB VRAM, and 512K sound RAM), so libraries for things like streaming video or data off a CD are not included. How much of a handicap is that? Not too much — *Ridge Racer* fits entirely within system RAM and could be done with *Yarouze*.

The website will provide a place for *Yarouze* owners — members is a better word — to ask questions of Sony technical support staff, upload and download software, and talk to each other about development issues. The web site currently serving the Japanese *Yarouze* program also sponsors members' homepages, but it is not known if the U.S. site will at this time.

$5 billion of game software and hardware will be sold in the U.S. this year. It's an industry dominated by corporations. But it wasn't always this way...



Some hardcore gamers may pick up *Yarouze* just to play other people's games

To fully understand the potential significance of *Yarouze*, some history is required. The video and computer game industry is huge — the latest figures indicate that over $5 billion of hardware and software will be sold in the U.S. this year. Increasingly, though, it's an industry dominated by a few massive corporations. But things weren't always this way.

Fifteen or twenty years ago, sure, one's console options were dictated solely by one or two companies, but with personal computers like the Apple II and Commodore 64, things were much different.

For PC games, no prepackaged software industry existed to speak of. The best you got was a floppy disk and some mimeographed instructions, tastefully packaged in a Ziplock bag. The person ziplocking the software was likely the same person who designed and wrote the program and did the art and music.

There was an excitement present during that time, a feeling that one was participating in something new and different. The truth is less romantic — a lot of that early software, frankly, sucked (there isn't a very large quality control department in a one-person shop). Still, it was rarely predictable.

With no established genres or gaming paradigms, your $10 Ziplock-encased game was as likely to contain a shooting game as it was a text-based game where you controlled truffle sniffing pigs. And if you didn't like a game, it usually wasn't too much of a stretch to either go ahead and modify the code of the game you just bought, or rewrite the same game in a style

more to your liking.

As the industry grew and matured, computers became popular with people more interested in simply using them than programming them. Companies that started in bedrooms as hobbies, producing software for other hobbyists, grew and began producing software for non-hobbyists.

That was a good thing, because they started quality assurance departments, conducted focus group tests, and began to give gamers exactly what they wanted. There were some downsides to this (largely inevitable) process. As games grew in size and complexity, releasing a game became a larger financial risk (a game that takes a year to create costs a hell of a lot more to develop than a hack knocked together in a weekend). To ensure a good return on investment, most games released were in one of a few specialized genres, and innovation began to slow. Still, many hit games, like Peter Molyneuyeux's *Populous*, were still the product of one person or very small teams.

Then came *Myst*, and with it a flood of multimedia-equipped PCs. Despite *Myst's* merits (or lack thereof), it radically changed consumers' expectations of what a computer game should be, graphically. Point blank, expectations shot through the roof. Although a dedicated amateur might have a shareware hit, producing anything approaching commercial quality suddenly required far more dollars and time than most hobbyists had. This has only exacerbated the problem of decreased innovation. Id's *Doom*, released just before the "CD-ROM revolution," was perhaps the last title that was successfully produced "in the garage."

"Since CD-ROMs came in, the audience has demanded so much that you can't really innovate," says Jordan Mechner, creator of the classic *Karateka* and *Prince of Persia* titles. "To have a bright idea and follow it through to the point where it is a sellable game, you now need millions of dollars and a team of trained professionals." Understandably, companies are reluctant to spend millions of dollars on anything but sure things, in well-known genres. "The game industry has been paralyzed — it's really hard to be creative," laments Mechner.

Say what you want about how the old classics aren't what they're remembered to be, at least their designers were not afraid to try new things. Today, with the majority of video and computer games vigorously locked into a few genres, innovation in gameplay has largely been replaced by mere technological advances. To be sure, sometimes advances in technology can advance gameplay (*WaveRace*, and *Tomb Raider* would not have been possible two years ago), but *Quake* is not much more than what *Doom* would have been if P166s had existed in '93.

If the game industry is to avoid sliding into the same paradigm as TV (every year it's the same old rubbish, just with different actors), with any innovation or experimentation crushed by market pressures, it needs some kind of

Tips from the Pros

Will Botti

Lead Programmer, Black Ops

Key Titles: *Black Dawn, Agile Warrior, Robocop versus Terminator*



Will Botti has been programming games since he was in the fifth grade

Ten things a 3D shooter should include:

1) Easy controls that perform hard-to-do maneuvers

In *Black Down*, controlling your angle of attack is easy — just up or down on the D-pad. In a real chopper, you'd need to worry about collective, blade pitch, wind, and so on. Easier is generally better.

2) Ability to destroy entire environments

In *Agile Warrior*, many gamers really enjoyed being able to deform the environment and create canyons through mountains. Not realistic, but who gives a shit?

3) Secret stuff

People love secrets, be they hidden areas or hidden powerups. Secrets help give the joy of discovery, and the power of that knowledge. Try playing a *Quake* deathmatch with someone who knows all the secret areas — you're gonna get waxed.

4) Large, dynamic 3D explosions

3D games should have 3D explosions.

5) Large, high-detail onscreen objects

In 2D fighting games, it was the "big sprite" that ruled the day. *Zongief* filled our screens and we loved it. Just because games are in 3D and a lot of the action may be 'into' the screen doesn't mean things have to be small. Make 'em big.

6) Vectored bullets

Bullets fire from the enemies' position and "vector" or move towards the player. Sounds simple, but lots of games miss the "avoidathon" gameplay that vector bullets provide.

7) Detailed collision between objects

Compare two game engines — *Tekken* vs. *Toshinden*. The collision in *Tekken* is superior, so the *Tekken* player is more empowered. Result? Read the sales reports and see!

8) Damage by degrees

The more levels of damage an object has, the more realistic/immersive it is. Good examples are the awesome submersible-cracking in *Earthworm Jim*, or the player ship in *Warhawk*. When a player gets hit in a 3D game, you should: show a "ping" animation (bullet sparks), deform the geometry of the model, change the texture map to destroyed state, or reduce the controllability of the player vehicle (carefully).

Remember, though, there's a fine line between fun and frustration.

9) Payoff for advancement

Too many games end with a static screen. Give the player a real reward. The best example is in *Tekken 2*.

10) Two-player option

If possible, make the game two-player. I'll take playing against someone in the same room over playing the computer or even someone on the Internet any day! I want to see my opponent react and get pissed, and then try to get even!

"If you can't make a game with the tools that Sony provides, you're an idiot and don't belong in the business"

jump start, a way of bringing new designers into the mainstream, without being marginalized into the shareware ghetto or stuck being junior programmers on the latest *Doom* clone. *Yarouze* may very well be that jump start.

"This is one of the best things that's happened in a very long time," says programming evangelist and *Earthworm Jim* creator David Perry of Shiny Entertainment. "Creating a videogame requires passion, and passion is something that a lot of people have — but a lot of people with passion can't get anywhere near a development system and get through the rules and regs of making a game."

Industry veteran Eugene Jarvis, creator of *Defender, Robotron*, and *Cruisin' USA*, is equally enthusiastic. "It'll be wild — imagine linking up all these lone wolf designers over the net to create a huge meta project — if you can get any lone wolves to agree on anything. This is an awesome development."

No doubt. By enabling enthusiasts to create their own games, Sony has vastly lowered the barriers to entry for would-be developers. Also, it has created an environment in which new ideas, unrestrained by market pressures, can be tried and tested, the best of which may advance the state of the art of the industry.

"Reducing the cost of entry into the industry will bring people into it," said Mark Cerny, president of development at Universal. "The whole reason *Disruptor* exists is because an enthusiastic hobbyist could start development on 3DO, since it had cheap development hardware. We saw the prototype running on 3DO and agreed to fund development on PlayStation."

He continued, "What we'll see primarily is hobbyists creating purely passion-driven games with no consideration for commercial success. I think we'll see some great games we wouldn't have seen otherwise."



Once you've pulled the system out of the box and removed the packaging, this is what your $750 (or so) buys you. The really cool bits — the PSX C libraries —are on the silver CD

Yarouze may not change the gaming world. But someone who gets their start on _Yarouze_ might

Despite enthusiasm

from the developer community, skeptics may ask some questions about the true importance of *Yarouze*. Doesn't the possibility for independent, enthusiast development already exist on the PC? Other than *Doom*, what has the shareware world brought us, except for a mynad of lame shooters? Why should it be any different on PlayStation. In short, what's the big deal?

The answer to this question reveals, in large measure, just what is so exciting about the initiative as a whole, especially considering that most *Yarouze* members will have already tried their hands at game coding on the PC or Mac.

First, this is the first time that anyone will be able to develop for a console system without a significant cash outlay, which will give enthusiasts easy access to a single standard hardware platform. Instead of attempting to develop for a lowest common denominator of hardware (or worse, a Windows API), people will be able to concentrate on exploiting the PlayStation hardware as fully as possible.

The program libraries will enable people to get up to speed in complex 3D development far faster than they would be able to on a PC. The libraries will also aid more novice developers whose own 3D skills might be sub-par at first.

Also significant is the support level from Sony and fellow *Yarouze* members that will be available on the website. For the first time, hobbyist game developers will have someplace official to go to get information on issues. It is also expected that the website will, as it has done in Japan, become a repository for source code that will enable faster learning of just how to program the system. The importance of support from Sony, particularly for novices, cannot be overstated.

According to Will

Botti of Black Dps, "In a lot of ways, PlayStation's success is directly related to the caliber of Sony's 'teachers' — the staff at SCEI and SCEA — and their 'teaching materials' — PlayStation development kits and artist/sound tools." With Sony extending this level of support to include novices, software produced for *Yarouze* may well outstrip the quality of comparable PC software.

Even the 3.5MB limit will probably not be too much of a factor — remember, before the advent of CD-based systems, 3.5MB was considered quite a lot of storage space. "By



A shot from the *Yarouze* startup screen (top left), and more shots of nearly complete games. The Japanese *Yarouze* site is also home to many PS-X demos and hacks

limiting it to 2MB [main system RAM]," says Eugene Jarvis. "the focus needs to be on gameplay — not graphics."

Most importantly, though, the PlayStation provides a new horizon for enthusiast level programmers to explore and hack around in — a new world to conquer, exploit, and make their own, which is where most of the fun of programming, particularly at the hobbyist level, comes from.

Of course, the biggest benefit of the crossover between PC and *Yarouze* enthusiast developers will not be for them, but rather from them. For the first time, we will see innovative, hobbyist level development on the consoles. Game ideas that would never fly as commercial titles, but which may work far better on console than on PC, can now be implemented and enjoyed by other *Yarouze* owners.

Another exciting element about the system is that, unlike commercial PlayStation software, no approval process exists — anything goes. If you want to do *Lemonade Stand* on the system — go for it. "This is totally against the conventional wisdom that product must be controlled," says Jarvis, "It's neat to give access to anyone to do anything."

Don't expect the system to sell solely to programmers, either. In Japan, a large number of artists and designers have also purchased *Yarouze*, looking to team up with programmers to create games. **Next Generation** also expects some hardcore gamers to get *Yarouze* simply to play the games that others have created — as well as Japanese and European games (the black PlayStation has no teritorrial lockout).

The *Yarouze* system opens up a totally new range of possibilities for users, and has the potential to greatly invigorate the software industry as a whole.

So what does Sony get out of it? "If *Yarouze* were to be judged on marketability alone, I would say it's going to be a a big flop," says Will Botti. "Kids want to play games, not program them. I don't see *Yarouze* as a big profit center. But if we look deeper, we can see the reasoning behind Ken Kutaragi and Terry Tokunaka's plans for the system. In the same way that the extensive developer support helped endear top game designers to the platform, I see *Yarouze* as a way to endear the younger generation of hackers/game enthusiasts to Sony's PlayStation methodology: "Code in C, use our tools, don't reinvent the wheel, focus on games, not the friggin' video drivers, and so on."

In short, *Yarouze* will let enthusiasts concentrate on creating games, instead of being bogged down in the minutiae of programming for an OS like Windows that must also be able to run printer drivers and screensavers.

Ultimately, *Yarouze* may not change the videogaming world. But it could be someone who gets their start on *Yarouze* that does. And that's why it's so important.

Tips from the Pros

Dave Perry

President,
Shiny Entertainment

Key Titles:
Earthworm Jim, Aladdin, Cool Spot, Wild Nines, Global Gladiators, MDK



Dave Perry got his start writing game program listings for videogame magazines

Ten tips for game programming novices

"This is one of the best things that's happened in a very long time"

1) Starting: Challenge yourself and don't stop till you work it out. Getting a program that you designed to work is like winning a game (the same sort of feeling). You *will* get very frustrated, but frustration is good, because it is such a relief to get that damn thing working.
2) Learning: Go straight to the biggest bookstore you can possibly find. A good reference book can fix problems very quickly when you are working late. (Also use the Internet.)
3) Gameplay: Don't ever take control away from the joypad/keyboard unless your really want to piss off the player.
4) Gameplay: When you press jump, make him jump. Fight animators or anyone who tries to get you to do anything else. Instant response is *key*.
5) Personal: One of my best tricks is to make every damn possible thing random. If something repeats (for example if your character looks left and right) don't make it ping-pong in perfect timing like a metronome. Always slip in randomness so that something that does repeat never looks the same twice. Nothing in your game should move to a "beat."
6) Technical: Tables are the fastest way to program just about everything. If I have a bird that is flying and it randomly decides to swoop down, should I do a bunch of math to pick a random number? Or should I just grab the next value from a previously created table?. Your code grabs a value each time it wants a random number, if the number is greater than one hundred (>100), then make the bird swoop. It's as simple as that. When your program gets to the end of the table make it go back to the start. (No gamer will notice that the random numbers are being used again! — That's the beauty of it.)
7) Psychology: The best bit of a video game is winning. When a player does well, pat him on the head. It is *much* more important than you probably think. If he obviously screwed up, make him feel it was *his* mistake. This will make him think that with another go he will win. The player should *always* blame himself, not the game for failure.
8) Competition: Speed! If you can work out a way to get the screen being updated 60 times a second and someone else can only get 4 times a second, you have totally kicked his ass. This is another enjoyable part of programming. Speed comes from being clever and *not* doing things that other programmers do because you know that gamers won't notice. The quickest way to a gamers heart is to give him something smooth and sexy.
9) Business: If you want a job, make a great demo, send it to every publisher and team you would like to work for. Tell them that you have sent it to every other publisher and team. This means if they like it, they will move very, very fast. Good people are very hard to find, so if you are great, then apply for a job through our web page: http://www.shiny.com
10) Long-term: Sure, learn C to start. But never, never, ignore assembly language, it will never, go away. Somebody somewhere will always use asasembly language to make you look slow. At Shiny, our 3D games use really advanced RISC assembly code and heavily optimized Pentium assembly language. We cannot afford to be beaten. It should be your long-term goal too, and if you master these skills there is no team in the world that won't want you.



Out of box experience

So what do you get in the *Yarouze* box? Here's the official rundown of all the bits and pieces, plus all the optional extras you'll want to make full use of the system

Yarouze comes with everything you need to make software for PlayStation.

The *Yarouze* system itself is almost identical to a standard PlayStation, with the exception of different boot ROMs, the lack of a territorial lockout, and a radically different encryption scheme. (And, of course, it's black.) It differs from a professional level development system in that it has less RAM (just the standard 2MB main memory that comes with every PlayStation, and no extra RAM for debugging), and it doesn't have a CD-ROM emulator or come on a PC board.

Yarouze will come with a PC CD-ROM as well as a key disc for the PlayStation, and some manuals. The manuals are reference guides for the libraries and some PlayStation specific information, but if you're not a programmer now, don't get your hopes up — they aren't going to teach you C. Assuming you already program, though, you'll find them a well laid out guide to getting started with *Yarouze* development. On the PC CD-ROM will be C language tools, libraries and possibly code examples, although that was not determined at press time.

The standard tools supplied include the GNU Tool Chain, a Compiler Assembler, Linker, and GDB debugger. These are all "pretty direct ports of the existing Free Software Foundation tools," says Bill Rehbock , VP of R&D at SCEA. "They are a great starting point because they exist in some form for just about every platform and microprocessor in the world and most programmers are reasonably familiar with them."



Yarouze members will also receive utilities that enable conversion of standard audio and graphic files to PlayStation's format. It is expected that several third parties will also include cut-down or trial versions of their software: Expect at least a fully working demo version of one 3D package, as well as a texture-map editing utility. Also on the CD will be a nearly full compliment of the famous PlayStation development libraries. What's missing? First, some low-level model data support, which would make it pretty difficult to do something like *Tekken* or *Toshiden* right now. This support may be added at a later date if there is enough user demand. According to Rehbock, though, "the primary functions that are missing relate to CD access. The system needs to have our *Yarouze* CD in the black PlayStation itself to work, and we don't allow user-created CDs to be read. Also, the libraries are set up to be more akin to run-time libraries instead of getting compiled in with the user's code. This reduces the transfer time to the PlayStation when the user is debugging or wants to play the game."

The serial cable (left) connects your PC to the black PlayStation, but not (surprisingly), through the standard expansion port. The access card dongle (right), thwarts pirates

Because *Yarouze* needs to be pirate-proof, a special key disc and a hardware dongle that fits in memory port 1 are required when running programs that were loaded from a PC (obviously, the key disc is not necessary to run standard software in the black PlayStation). This limits the available space for programs to 2MB main system RAM, as well as the 1 MB VRAM and 512K sound RAM. Users will also not be able to read from the PC hard drive while running their programs.

In addition to preventing piracy, this means that games cannot be very large, as well as ensuring that the *Yarouze* program will not compete with the professional development kit.

However, a limit of 2MB RAM is not as bad as it may at first seem. First, quite a lot can be done in just 2MB RAM — not only can an extremely robust game engine run, but a complete game can be executed in RAM as well. *Ridge Racer* fits entirely within this 2MB limit, as would a single level of *WarHawk* or *Twisted Metal*. In short, 2MB is more than enough space in which to make a game engine and a fairly robust game — *Yarouze* titles will not be as restricted as the 2MB limit may imply to the casual observer.

Also, and more importantly, the only reason anyone would ever say that 2MB RAM is small in the first place is because developers have been spoiled over the past few years. Not so long ago, developers were creating classic games in 16K. Even given the overhead that coding in C language (versus assembly) adds, anyone who says they simply cannont create a good game or game engine in 2MB must be a very sloppy programmer.

Granted, graphics, particularly textures, may suffer with only 2MB main RAM, but this will force hobbyists to focus on the most important part of a game, the actual gameplay. Considering the most exciting aspect of the *Yarouze* program is the potential for novel, innovative games, a lack of graphic sophistication should not be that problematic.

Probably a more signifigant barrier to developers will not be the RAM limits, but the tools that come with the system. This is bare bones C and debugging folks, and anyone who has ever used a well-integrated development environment is unlikely to be thrilled by the prospect of using some of the tools supplied for *Yarouze* by Sony.

Enter Metrowerks, creators of the award-winning *CodeWarrior* C development environment. Metrowerks (http://www.metrowerks.com) came to fame with a series of PowerPC native development environments for the Mac. In October, Metrowerks released a version of *CodeWarrior* for PlayStation that runs on Mac or PC.

CodeWarrior for PlayStation costs $499, but it features such a nice feature set and devlopment environment that any *Yarouze* member who can afford it should buy a copy. It features an integrated development environment, GUI project manager, file-format converters built directly into the project manager, and drag-and-drop editing (as well, of course, as a full NIST certified ANSI C compiler, and a C++ compiler that is in track with the emerging ANSI/ISO standard).

If you plan on doing any serious artwork at all, you'll also want Adobe's *Photoshop* and probably some 3D app, too, although the 3D demo included on the CD may be enough. A sound utility may also be desirable.

Despite the RAM limitations, *Yarouze* is easily the best console development system deal of all time, even if most users will need to tack on an additional $500 for *CodeWarrior* for PlayStation.

Since the dawn of video and computer games, people have been saying, "I could do a better job than that." Now, through an innovative program that got its start in R&D, not the marketing department, Sony has given gamers a relatively easy and low cost way to prove it.

In Japan, *Yarouze*-authored software has run the gamut from shooting games to *Othello* to particle generator demos. There have also been memory card utilities written (so people can trade game saves over the Internet). Probably the most impressive "utility" is a hardware emulator for a 16-bit console system! The point is, gamers in Japan are already creating programs with *Yarouze* that Sony never expected.

What kind of games will hobbyists and enthusiasts in the U.S. make? That's up to you, but one thing is clear: Sony has delivered its promise of bringing the power of the PlayStation to the people.

Tips from the Pros

Jordan Mechner

President,
Smoking Car Productions

Titles: *Karateka, Prince of Persia, Last Express*



John Eaton, Smoking Car's "business guy" added tips of his own at the end of Jordan's

Ten things to do to do to ensure a more playable game

"A story is a series of events — a game is a series of actions. Actions not taken by the player don't count as actions."

1) The only significant actions are those that affect the player's ability to perform future actions. Everything else is bells and whistles.
2) Make a list of all the actions that the player can perform in the game, take a cold hard look at it and decide if it sounds like fun to you. If the list is boring, the game probably will be too.
3) In each situation ask yourself: What are the possible actions the player can take? If there are only two, it's weak. If there's only one, it's not even action. If a non-interactive sequence shows the player's character sneak into the compound, clobber a guard and put on his uniform, the player's action is "Watch non-interactive sequence." Giving the player one chance to click to clobber the guard or die isn't much better.
4) Design a clear and simple interface. The primary task of the interface is to present the player with a choice of the available actions at each moment and to provide instant feedback when the player makes a choice.
5) The player needs a goal at all times, even if it is a mistaken one. If there is nothing he wishes to accomplish, he will soon get bored, even if the game is rich with graphics and sound.
6) The more the player feels that the events of the game are being caused by his or her own actions, the better — even when it is an illusion.
7) Analyze the events of the story in terms of their effect on the player's goals. Anything that moves him closer to or further away from a goal, or gives him a new goal, is part of the game.
8) The longer the player plays without a break, the more we build up his sense of the reality of the world. Any time he dies or has to restart from a saved game, the spell is broken.
Alternative paths, recoverable errors, multiple solutions to the same problem, missed opportunities that can be made up later, are all good.
9) Don't introduce gratuitous obstacles just to create a puzzle. All plot twists should mean something for the story. If the game requires the player to drive somewhere, don't also require him to fill up his tank with gas first — unless maybe the tank was deliberately drained by an opponent...
10) As the player moves through the game, he should always have the feeling that he is passing up potentially interesting avenues of exploration. The perfect outcome is for him to win the game having done 95% of what there is to do, but left with the feeling that there must be another 50% he missed.

John Eaton's "Top Four Tips for Business"

1) Get yourself a good intellectual property lawyer who has experience in the industry.
2) Make sure you haven't given away any rights except those specified in the contract.
3) Be sure to work with a publisher that's not going to go bankrupt.
4) Take the budget, triple it, then add $1 million. Double your schedule, then add 6 months.

The company line

It's great for gamers, but what is Sony getting from *Yarouze*? Next Generation went to Sony Computer Entertainment America's Foster City headquarters to find out

Next Generation spoke to Sony VP of Third Party and R&D, Phil Harrison, VP of Marketing Andrew House, and VP of R&D Bill Rehbock to get Sony's perspective on *Yarouze*

NG: Explain the reasoning behind *Yarouze*

Phil: Philosophically, videogame systems are closed systems that don't allow the consumer to play around and do things with the software. And so you could argue the last time the consumer has been able to do that was with the Commadore 64 and the Apple IIgs, which means that there is a whole generation of consumers who have an interest in getting involved in the sort of gritty side of development, but can't do it.

NG: Well, you can on the PC..

Phil: ...but the PC is costly and complicated and is a moving target, so your average consumer is going to find it very difficult to get involved with.

One of the reasons for doing this program was to bring back the good old days of home development — the idea of hobby development, of two friends in the garage or in the spare room coming up with the next *Boulderdash*.

Obviously there are huge benefits subsequent to that, namely that the industry gets a whole load of new trained PlayStation programmers who are moving into the third-party community or even working for us.

NG: Do you realistically expect that the next *Boulderdash*, or *Doom* will come out of a *Yarouze*-equipped garage?

Phil: Well, "Why not?" is, I guess, the answer to that! If you look at some of the seminal games of all time they are always one-man enterprises. From Peter Molyneux sitting on his own developing *Populous* to Will Wright's *Sim City* or Sid Meier's *Civilization*, you know these were all one-man enterprises. So why shouldn't the next great game be developed in this way?

NG: And of course Sony will have exclusive rights to *Yarouze* developed games.

Phil: Well, not necessarily. We can't deny that that's an opportunity for us. But similarly there is opportunity for the third-party software companies to start working with these people as well. And yet, if we see the next *Sim City* or the next *Populous*, we're going to be falling over ourselves to work with these people and to help make the game into a fully fledged commercial product. But that's not the only reason why we are doing this.

There is a whole other business model out there for people to make money from perhaps getting involved with a compilation disk that we would do as a "best of" from this program. I guess you could also call *Yarouze* job training — so people can learn enough to go get a job at some hot start-up company and make their millions on the stock market ten years from now.

NG: Just how big do you estimate the demand for *Yarouze* will be in unit sales?

Phil: No idea, nor does it matter. I mean the infrastructure to support one user or twenty thousand is exactly the same. This is not PlayStation 2. This is not a mass market consumer proposition. But it is a highly strategic initiative that reaps the reward three years down the line. It does not really matter how big it is.

NG: What's the best case scenario for*Yarouze*?

Phil: I think the best thing would be a situation where **Next Generation** reviews a game. You give it a fantastic score and in interviewing the programmer, he confesses that this game actually started out when he was a member of the *Yarouze* development community and he took it to xyz company and they said, "This is great. Here's a job. Come work as part of a team and build your masterpiece into a fully fledged consumer product." That would be the dream.

I think that there is another benefit or another dream which would be that there are legions of programmers coming into the marketplace creatively and technically trained on PlayStation. Obviously, it benefits our third-party program for many many years to come. So it's kind of like insurance in that way.

In a perverse way, I want to see code listings in **Next Generation**. Typing in stuff from magazines. That's the same concept. I got my start in videogames by typing in listing of games from magazines. I learned to program by screwing around with them and saying, "This doesn't work, but what about this?" It would be great to see code examples in little routines printed in magazines. That would be great.

NG: Why call it *Yarouze*?

Andrew: It's a Japanese slang expression for "Let's do it!" It was a tag-line used for just about everything in the early PlayStation marketing — "1,000,000 units? *Yarouze*!"

Phil: I think it embodies the creative empowerment that this program is all about. Which is: "OK, Mister Gameplayer. You have always sat at home and said, 'I could do better than that.' You know, 'This game sucks. I know I could do better than that.' Well here you are, go do it. *Yarouze*!"

NG: Will SCEA be pursuing education opportunities with *Yarouze*?

Phil: Oh yes, absolutely. A logical outlet for this product is into computer graphics and computer science courses at varying educational levels, be it the Master's Degree level or moving down to vocational training and technical colleges. We'll have a mechanism for government and educational establishments to buy systems.



From top to bottom, Sony's Andrew House, Bill Rehbock, and Phil Harrison

NG: How much will *Yarouze* change the impression of PlayStation in the eyes of the man on the street? Perhaps someone who has no intention of ever actually buying one?

Andrew: I think that it will certainly enhance the overall brand image of PlayStation. I think that it lends an air of creativity to the platform. It obviously shows that we are forward-looking and that we are setting up plans for the future. I think there is a lot of positive impact to be had.

I also think that there will be significant interest from general consumers as to what's developed there and I think that you create a very positive spiral because you have people who are creating their own stuff and want other people to look at it and you'll have a significant number of interested consumers who will be very keen to seen how it's emerging.

Phil: I think that knowing that this particular

game was created by "one of us" has some appeal. Empowerment is a very compelling hook for our target consumer. And so knowing that you can do this with a PlayStation, even if you yourself are not going to it or don't have the skills or the inclination, just knowing that PlayStation is capable of this is a very compelling part of the brand ethos, the thing that makes PlayStation what it is. And I think that will become stronger as time goes on.

Bill: The other thing that you are going to see is that people will be seeing the realization of their wishes. If a guy is up on a web site saying, "Boy it would be really cool if a game like X existed," who's more likely to pick up on it and do it, Virgin or a *Yarouze* member? No *Yarouze* member is going to say, "OK we'll get a focus group to check it out, and run it past the midwest sales manager." They'll just do it and upload it to the website.

NG: How do you expect the distribution and creation model to work?

Phil: I think that what we are expecting to see is that along with the executable program, the source code goes up as well. And a lot of people will say, "This is how I did it." Then I expect two or three people to band together and say, "Let's work on a masterpiece. You do this section of the game, and we will do this bit, and my mate down at USC is going to do the graphics."

Bill: One thing that we have seen in Japan is that we have *Yarouze* members who are not programmers or artists, but are designers who have good ideas. They get together with the programmers and artists and say, "Here is this diamond in the rough, but it'd be really cool if you did this and this and this."

Then someone else says, "You know that programmer art really sucks," and contributes art to it. So we have these titles that are in incubation, that have scattered development members and wow — it's 1975 all over again.

Phil: *Yarouze* is almost the perfect Internet application in that respect. You can work with people you've never met in different countries, in different time zones, where you never have any real-time interaction with them. I think that's very much the kind of collective ideal of this, and it's something which is completely out of our control.

And that's the appeal of it! There're no content guidelines, there's no approval process, there is no requirement that the product fulfill certain taste or commercial requirements. Because this is not a retail program.

Full products going onto shelves are sensitive to the dynamics of the marketplace, because there're only so many linear feet of shelf space in stores. But with this, the shelf space is infinite. It's virtual shelf space. So people can go and do what they like, and they don't even have to be games. They don't just have to be for a typical target demographic. They can be all kinds of weird and wonderful things, and that's part of the appeal — what are these people going to come up with?

NG: What about the limited RAM? Is 2MB enough to create a great title in?

Phil: Well it's 3.5 if you include the 1MB of VRAM and half a meg of sound RAM. So that's a lot if you think that *Ridge Racer* is the benchmark. Most users don't have a CD-ROM burner and an SGI to create 15-minute rendered intros, so we don't think it's a problem. It also puts the focus on the essence of the idea rather than the production. On commercial software, where you're charging fifty bucks for the product, the focus is on the production values and production quality to justify the price. This doesn't have those kind of commercial dynamics applied to it. And so you can have a really really simple idea that would never stack up on a store shelf. But it is an absolutely boiled down refined well-formed concept. One of the things we will do is look at these pure concepts and evaluate them and go, "Wow that would make a fantastic product" and work with the creator to turn it into something great.

Tips from the Pros



Mark Cerny

President of Product Development. Universal

Key Titles: *Marble Madness, Sonic 2, Crash Bandicoot*

Cerny completed *Marble Madness* when he was only 17. Think about that...

Ten tips for making money from your *Yarouze* game

1) From time to time, invite PlayStation owners over to play your game
There are many things that can be learned by watching them play, the biggest being if they are having fun!
2) Keep the rules of the game simple
Ideally, first-time players should understand and enjoy the game without instructions.
3) Make sure the player doesn't get "stuck in a rut"
If the difficulty progression of the game is not smooth, players will become stuck at a certain point (again, inviting PlayStation owners over to play the game will help).
4) If the game is a genre game, pay attention to the unwritten rules of the genre
For example, while there may not be abstract reasons why a certain controller scheme is best, there are definitely conventions. If you are doing an action game with a jump, survey the successful games in the genre to see if there is a button that is always used.
5) Use assembly language to speed your frame rate
This will help you compete with other games in the category.
6) Put in music, even if it's temporary
This will help even a prototype game feel alive!
7) Take it as far as you can before you start to look for a publisher
The farther a game is to towards completion, the better your negotiating position.
8) Realize your (probably) can't take it all the way
For example, professional sound effects and music costing $50,000 will make the final product much more slick, but you won't have the resources to do this until you've lined up a production deal. The most important thing to complete is the gameplay.
9) Pick your publisher carefully
Is this a company that puts out game you think are good? Is it stable?
10) Bet on your success
If it is possible to forgo some money early on, in return for big money later on, do it!

"What is the videogame equivalent of the black and white art movie? We're going to get to see."

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EVERY PLAYSTATION GAME PLAYED, REVIEWED, AND RATED

Over 160 Sony PlayStation games rated for your perusal. Reviews of new PlayStation games start on page 168. Enjoy...



Each game is rated out of a maximum of five stars. Here's what each of the scores signifies:

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ **Bad**
Crucially flawed in design or application

Adidas Power Soccer
Pub & Rev: Psygnosis
The sim mode is nice, but this title really shines in the four-player arcade mode. But if you haven't got a multi-tap, avoid.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 21)



Agile Warrior
Pub: Virgin Dev: Black Ops
Before the excellent *Black Dawn*, Black Ops cut its teeth on this flawed and clunky (but nevertheless fun) F-111X "simulation." Many gamers loved it, but we're not fans.
Rating: ★★ (NG 13)

Air Combat
Pub & Dev: Namco
This decent flight game is one of the earliest PlayStation titles and hasn't aged as well as some, having been surpassed by the likes of *Black Dawn* and others.
Rating: ★★★

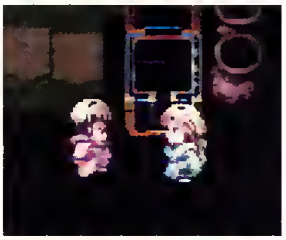
Alien Trilogy
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Probe
Perhaps PlayStation's most innovative *Doom*-clone, *Alien Trilogy* maximizes a movie license to create a compelling game experience, which is no mean feat.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 18)

Allied General
Pub: SSI Dev: SSI
This follow-up to the classic PC strategy/wargame *Panzer General* boasts much of what made the original such a delight (except now you play on the other side).
Rating: ★★★★

Alone in the Dark 2
Pub: Kokopelli Dev: Infogrammes
This aging graphic adventure still has some ment, but frankly it's yesterday's news, and releasing it to PlayStation in the wake of *Resident Evil* just makes it redundant.
Rating: ★★

Aqueneut's Holidey
Pub: Sony Dev: ArtDink
Build a reef, explore the underseas, and look at fish in this classic "non-game" exploration experience from ArtDink. Points for effort, but most gamers will be bored.
Rating: ★★ (NG 11)

Arc the Lad
Pub: Sony Dev: G Craft
A cool soundtrack, exquisite graphics, and an in-depth plot make this traditional RPG stand out — even though there are few other quality RPGs for PlayStation.
Rating: ★★ (NG 10)



Assault Rigs
Pub: Sony Dev: Psygnosis
This low-grade tank sim is remarkably like being dropped into the tank game of the movie *Tron* — not an exciting possibility no matter how you look at it.
Rating: ★★

A-Train
Pub: Maxis Dev: Art Dink
Build a train, build a city, and build a fortune in this classic Art Dink title. Strictly for strategy fans; everyone else will be bored to tears.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 4)

Bases Loedad
Pub & Dev: Jaleco
Jaleco's long-running baseball series ran out of steam long ago, and this totally disappointing 32-bit incarnation is a perfect reason to let it die.
Rating: ★

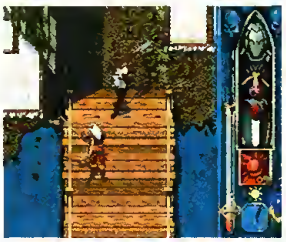
Battle Arene Toshinden
Pub: PlayMatas Dev: Takara
This 3D fighter was the pinnacle of the early PlayStation "look" (awesome), but unfortunately also the depths of early PlayStation gameplay (extremely shallow).
Rating: ★★★ (NG 4)

Battle Arena Tohshinden 2
Pub: Sony Dev: Takara
Whereas *Virtua Fighter 2* was a great improvement over the original, *Toshinden 2* merely treads water and serves to demonstrate the shallowness of the original.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 16)

Beyond the Beyond
Pub: Sony Dev: Camelot
PlayStation RPG fans have suffered a lack of quality releases. This is simple, derivative, occasionally frustrating — and not enough to put off waiting for Square's *FF7*.
Rating: ★★ (NG 23)

Block Down
Pub: Virgin Dev: Black Ops
An assault chopper simulation (with plenty of arcade action), *Black Dawn* rivals *Warhawk* in terms of playability — and certainly beats it in terms of challenge.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 23)

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kein
Pub: Activision Dev: Crystal Dynamics
As a resurrected and revenge-seeking vampire, Kain morphs, blood-sucks, and casts explicit Flay and Decay spells. Gory FMVs make this not for the thin-skinned.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 24)



Bogey Deed 6
Pub: Sony Dev: Pegasus/Asmik
An out-and-out arcade shooter, *Bogey Dead 6* (*SideWinder* in Japan) offers a chance to be "Top Gun" in a variety of USAF planes. Intellectually challenging, this is not.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 22)

Bottom of the Ninth
Pub & Dev: Konami
Konami takes this promising sports title a little too far towards "arcade" and away from "simulation" for our tastes. Nevertheless, *Bottom of the Ninth* is fun.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 19)

Boxer's Road
Pub: Naw Corp (Japan) Dev: Naw Corp
The boxing may be the worst part of *Boxer's Road*. But the building of each boxer's career is so intricate that this action/strategy sports game is still worth a look.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 13)

Braindead-13
Pub & Dev: ReadySoft
The latest of the "watch the cartoon, push a button" games spawned by *Dragon's Lair* eons ago. Let's just hope it's the last. Does anyone play these things anymore?
Rating: ★★

Bubble Bobble
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Taito
Not quite a "classic," this weird proto-puzzle type game contains Bub and Bob, who found greater fame and fortune in the better known *Bust-a-Move*.
Rating: ★★★

Bust-A-Move 2
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Taito
A satisfying sequel to one of the cooler action/puzzle, vaguely *Tetris*-inspired titles of the last couple of years, this game is sure to please, especially in two-player mode.
Rating: ★★★★

Cesper
Pub: Interplay Dev: Fun Com
A pretty but thoroughly average graphic adventure with a smattering of action. Casper's appeal is limited to younger players who couldn't get enough of the movie.
Rating: ★★★

Chessmester 3D
Pub & Dev: Mindscape
One of the best computer chess games gets ported to PlayStation, making it the best chess sim for the platform — OK, so it's the only one, but it's still great.
Rating: ★★★★

College Slam
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Iguana
The same combo of action and basketball from *NBA Jam* but with college players, *College Slam* doesn't offer anything new, different, or interesting.
Rating: ★★

Cosmic Race
Pub & Dev: Neorax (Japan)
This space chase/race game is the worst game ever made. No control, no graphics beyond those supplied by the Sony libranes, no point. In short: total crap.
Rating: ★ (NG 7)

Crash Bandicoot
Pub: Sony Dev: Naughty Dog
DK, Crash's zany "not quite 3D" platforming antics may appeal to the novice. But we've played this too many times before, and you probably have too.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 23)



Crime Crackers
Pub: Sony (Japan) Dev: Media Vision
A *Doom*-clone/RPG that manages to capture the worst elements of both genres, with few redeeming qualities. Not really worth anyone's time, to be honest.
Rating: ★ (NG 7)

Criticom
Pub: Vic Tokai Dev: Kronos
Another 3D brawler that looks great but takes gaming back to the pre-NES dark ages. *Criticom*'s graphical gimmick is real-time light-sourcing, and — perhaps inevitably — its gameplay truly blows.
Rating: ★ (NG 13)

Cyberia
Pub: Interplay Dev: Xatrix
Pre-rendered rail shooters — you either love 'em or loathe 'em (and we don't love 'em). *Cyberia* is one of the best, but still laughs unforgivable in the face of interactivity.
Rating: ★★ (NG 16)

CyberSled
Pub & Dev: Namco
This arcade fighting/mech/robot game was OK but doesn't merit home conversion, especially into a glitchy split-screen game.
Rating: ★★ (NG 9)

Cyberspeed
Pub & Dev: Mindscape
Unfortunately for *Cyberspeed*, *Wipeout* quickly left all other futunstic racers graphically lacking. Worse, *Cyberspeed* doesn't have the gameplay to make up for it.
Rating: ★★ (NG 13)

Cyber Wer
Pub: Coco Nuts Dev: Soft Vision
It's like an FMV version of *Dragon's Lair* with a few meager shooting/maze sequences. This sequel to the *Lawnmower Man* brings new definition to the word "dismal."
Rating: ★ (NG 11)

D
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Warp
The PlayStation version of this cult hit, horror graphic adventure is every bit as slow as its Satum and 3DO counterparts, but also every bit as creepy and involving.
Rating: ★★★

Dark Stelkers
Pub & Dev: Capcom
An arcade-perfect conversion of Capcom's *Street Fighter 2*-derived monster mash, *Dark Stalkers* represents the apex of the 2D fighting genre. Classic, but not innovative.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 15)

Deception
Pub & Dev: Tecmo
Play Satan in this darkly disturbing 3D adventure, luring hapless victims into hell. *Deception* contains an unusual story and rich graphics, but is not for young kids.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 24)

Defcon 5
Pub: Data East Dev: Millenium
Defcon 5 sacnfices much action for a more strategic pace. Players defend a space station from alien invasion; while many novel features exist, most have found it too slow.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 12)

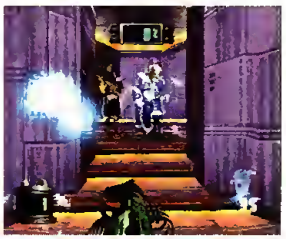
Descent
Pub & Dev: Interplay
First-person shooting gets six degrees of freedom with *Descent*. The PC game was excellent, and the PlayStation version is just as good. It might just make you puke.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 17)

Destruction Derby
Pub: Psygnosis Dev: Reflections
Using morphing models and texture sets to the extreme, *DD* provides maximum fun for a two-player destruction derby when linked. One-player racing is only so-so.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 11)

Discworld
Pub: Psygnosis Dev: Perfect Entertainment
An early PlayStation hit, this "wacky" graphic adventure holds up. Fairly challenging and cheesily funny, it's not for everyone but should keep folks laughing.
Rating: ★★★

Die Hard Trilogy
Pub: Fox Dev: Probe
Against all odds, this three-games-in-one (over-the-shoulder shooter, *Virtua Cop*-clone, and driving game) is more than the sum of its parts. It's great value and a lot of fun.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 23)

Disruptor
Pub: Universal Dev: Insomniac
Spell-like psionic weapons add variety to this first true Playstation 3D shooter. Studio quality sound and dazzling graphics make this a step beyond *Alien Trilogy*.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 24)



Doom
Pub: Williams Dev: Id
One of the best versions of one of the best games ever. Finally, console players can see what their PC siblings were talking about.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 15)

Dregon Bell Z
Pub & Dev: Bandai (Japan)
Based on the famous animated series in Japan, *Dragon Ball Z* is a 2D fighter that adds nothing to the genre beyond a nice otaku license.
Rating: ★★ (NG 11)

ESPN Extreme Gemes
Pub & Dev: Sony
One game practically everyone who's bought a PlayStation has tried, thanks to the demo disc included with the system, this rollerblade, street luge, bicycle, and skateboard racing game is, well, not bad.
Rating: ★★★

Fade to Black
Pub: Electronic Arts Dev: Delphine
Delphine takes the delightful play-style of *Flashback* and brings it into 3D. It's hard to save and easy to die, but this action/adventure is well worth your time.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 21)

rating

FIFA Soccer '96
Pub: EA Dev: Extended Play
One of the deepest, most beautiful, and eminently playable sports games hasn't lost a thing since its release, and given that *FIFA '97* looks like it could *really* blow...
Rating: ★★★★

Final Doom
Pub: Williams Dev: Williams/id
Challenging, but not as good as the original. Jerky, with a low frame rate, imprecise control, and visible seams. Includes the best fan-designed WADs.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 24)

The Final Round
Pub & Dev: Konami
Konami's stab at a golf sim shows promise but could have been better. Slow paced (even for golf), and with a very arcade-like interface, it's no challenge for *PGA Tour*.
Rating: ★★

Formula 1
Pub: Psygnosis Dev: Bizarre Creations
This challenging race title contains terrifyingly realistic graphics and game play. Its startling depth satisfies even the most hard core racers. A perfect ride.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 24)

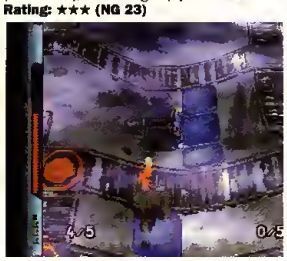


Geom Cube
Pub & Dev: American Technos
To call a spade a spade, this is basically a 3D version of *Tetris*. The game has a small following, but for our money it just needlessly complicates a simple premise.
Rating: ★★

Gex
Pub & Dev: Crystal Dynamics
Ready for the 2D side-scrolling antics of a wise-cracking gekko? This direct port of the 3DO version of the game is still a little fun. Emphasis on "little."
Rating: ★★★ (NG 15)

Goal Storm
Pub & Dev: Konami
Polygonal characters may look weird (*Goal Storm* seems to be populated by very tall, faceless monkeys), but their great movement is this soccer title's strength.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 11)

Gridrunner
Pub: Virgin Dev: Radical
A lousy one-player game, this cross between "capture the flag" and "tag" comes alive in multiplayer mode. Originally called Eurit ("You're It"), this is a group purchase.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 23)



Gunner's Heaven
Pub: Media Vision Dev: Treasure
Sony Computer America has kept 2D PlayStation side-scrollers away from the U.S. This is unfortunate, because this shoot-fest is a lot of fun.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 5)

Gunship
Pub & Dev: Microprose
A classic Amiga game overhauled for PlayStation? Can't fail? Wrong. This combat helicopter sim plays boring, looks dreadful, and will send all but Schwarzkopf to sleep.
Rating: ★★ (NG 22)

Hardball 5
Pub & Dev: Accolade
Accolade's *Hardball* series has long been popular among PC gamers. This half-hearted PlayStation conversion lacks any arcade thrills — and singularly fails to impress.
Rating: ★★ (NG 19)

Hi Octene
Pub: EA Dev: Bullfrog
Although this futuristic hovercraft racing game has some nice touches — the morphing tracks are certainly unique — it never manages to be more than average.
Rating: ★★

The Hive
Pub & Dev: Trimark
The graphics are very nice, and the control is fine, but this space combat rail-based shooter is still a rail-based shooter, which makes it plumb boring.
Rating: ★★

Horned Owl
Pub: Sony Dev: Movic
Horned Owl is Sony's response to Sega's *Virtua Cop*. It's a competent light gun shooter, with none of *Virtua Cop*'s rendered-on-the-fly maimings — it's kinda tame.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 22)

Impact Racing
Pub: Acclaim Dev: JVC/Funcom
Combat car racing games have been done better before, but they've been done a lot worse too, and at least *Impact Racing* keeps things moving along at a fast pace.
Rating: ★★★

International Track & Field
Pub: Konami Dev: Konami
With its large and detailed 3D competitors and 12-event roster, this major button-mashing fest is arguably the best track-and-field sports sim for a home console.
Rating: ★★★★

In the Hunt
Pub: THQ Dev: Irem
This action-packed, two-player, underwater sub shooter may impress the kiddie pool, but most 32-bit gamers need more depth.
Rating: ★ (NG 14)

In the Zone
Pub & Dev: Konami
Showcasing great graphics and slam-dunks, but with realistic play left warming the bench, Konami's original *In the Zone* doesn't go the distance. The sequel offers more sim-based features and is more balanced.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 14)

Iron & Blood
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Tnkn 2
Even though the 3D characters, drawn from TSR's AD&D mold, are richly detailed and smoothly animated, the fighting is dull and the audio affects are passa.
Rating: ★★ (NG 24)



Johnny Bazooketone
Pub: US Gold Dev: Arc Development
When this was released, sprite-based side-scrolling action games were waning; now it seems positively archaic. Although colorful and fast, it's still a dinosaur.
Rating: ★★

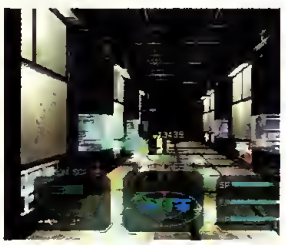
Jumping Flesh!
Pub & Dev: Sony
Before *Mario 64*, this was the premier example of a 3D platform game. And it's still really fun. It's short but definitely worth checking out.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 5)



Jumping Flash 2
Pub: Sony Dev: Exact
Not enough of a jump past the original to justify a five-star rating, this is still a very fun game. A little short, maybe, but for 3D platform action, this satisfies.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 20)

Jupiter Strike
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Taito
Noteworthy mainly for having no redeeming qualities, this is a pathetic attempt at a track-based shooter. One star is charitable. Frankly, Acclaim owes us a star for this dog.
Rating: ★ (NG 15)

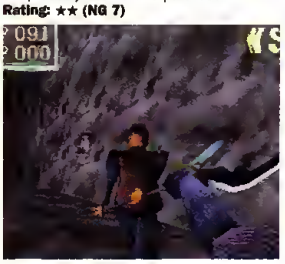
Kileek the Blood 2
Pub: Sony Dev: Genki
A slow-paced *Doom* clone with enough graphic improvements and gameplay tweaks to distinguish itself from the original *Kileak*, but not enough to advance its position.
Rating: ★ (NG 15)



Kileek: The DNA Imperative
Pub: Sony Dev: Genki
A clone is often a little corrupted compared to the original. Think of this as a 10th-generation *Doom* clone. Vaguely captivating, but mostly boring.
Rating: ★★ (NG 5)

Killing Zone
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Naxat Soft
The concept is cool — 3D fighting with classic monsters (Dracula, Frankenstein, Mummy), but the execution is as flawed as possible: slow, glitchy, and hard to control.
Rating: ★ (NG 20)

King's Field
Pub & Dev: From Software (Jpan)
Not to be confused with *King's Field 2* (released here as *King's Field 1*), this action-RPG looks nice and is a little fun, but probably not worth a purchase.
Rating: ★★ (NG 7)



King's Field 2
Pub: Asciiwrrn Dev: From Softwarn
In danger of falling between two stools (both 3D combat and RPG), *King's Field 2* nevertheless entertains throughout, albeit in a diluted "Jack-of-all-trades" kind of way.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 16)

King of Fighters '95
Pub: Sony Dev: SNK
A 2D fighting game at a time when 2D fighting games are exhausting their possibilities, *KOF '95* compounds the problem by adding long load times.
Rating: ★★

Krazy Ivan
Pub & Dev: Psygnosis
"Fighting robot" games have been done worse than *Krazy Ivan*, with its graphics and challenging design. Too bad it's so damn short, it could've scored another star.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 17)

Loaded
Pub: Interplay Dev: Gremlin
With buckets of blood and then more blood, *Loaded* makes a powerful first impression. But beyond the slick visuals and non-stop action, there's just not enough actual game.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 14)

Magic Carpet
Pub: EA Dev: Bullfrog
A combo flight and strategy game in a fantasy setting, *Magic Carpet* has a lot of challenging action. But a weird control scheme and so-so graphics fall to deliver.
Rating: ★★★

Madden '97
Pub: EA Sports Dev: Tiburon
Madden set the standard for two-player football titles, and the latest version breaks new ground with crystalline graphics, smooth animation, and top-speed action.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 24)

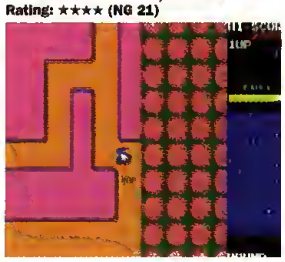
Mobile Suit Gundam
Pub: Bnndni (Jnpan) Dev: Sunrise
Picture *Mechwarrior*, but without any of the interesting bits — just lots of long stretches of texture-mapped wasteland, followed by too short fire-fights.
Rating: ★★ (NG 10)

Mortal Kombat 3
Pub & Dev: Williams
MK3 was Sony's big exclusive, and hence many gamers bought a PlayStation. While 32-bit still has a place for 2D fighters, the derivative *MK3* isn't one of them.
Rating: ★★ (NG 12)

Motor Toon Grend Prix
Pub & Dev: Sony (Japan)
This hyper-cutesy racing title showed off PlayStation's MIME animation prowess but was only minorly fun to play.
Rating: ★★ (NG 4)

Myst
Pub: Psygnosis Dev: Micro Cabin
It's the most famous graphic adventure of all time, but that doesn't make it good. Beautiful, but with little sense of logic and above all painfully slow, *Myst* just blows.
Rating: ★★

Namco Museum, Vol. 1
Pub & Dev: Namco
Play arcade perfect (really!) versions of *Rally X*, *New Rally X*, *Toy Pup*, *Pole Position*, *Galaga*, *Pac Man*, and *Star Destroyer Bosconian*. All for only $50! These titles are definitely classics.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 21)



Namco's Museum, Vol. 2
Pub & Dev: Namco
Namco's second collection disappoints, with only *Super Pac Man* and shooters *Gaplus* and *Xevious* worth playing. *Mappy*, *Grobda*, and *Dragon Buster* bore.
Rating: ★★ (NG 24)

NASCAR Racing
Pub: Sierra Dev: Papyrus
This bare-bones race is for the die-hard stock car racers who love *NASCAR* speed so much that they don't mind the dull graphics and repetitive courses.
Rating: ★★ (NG 24)

NBA Jam TE
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Iguana
While many basketball games fake authenticity, the two-on-two *NBA Jam* series is pure fun. The *Jam TE* is one of PlayStation's most playable sports titles.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 12)

NBA Shoot Out
Pub: Sony Dev: Sony
Spectacular successful in Europe, *Shoot Out* lacks the refinement and detail to impress U.S. basketball aficionados. Still, the graphics are great and the dunks slamming.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 15)



NBA In the Zone
Pub & Dev: Konami
Although it looks good, this is a basketball game for fans who just like to watch highlight reels: non-existant defense and muddy controls mar a promising effort.
Rating: ★★

NCAA Gamebreaker
Pub & Dev: Sony
The first 32-bit college football game features far more realistic graphics and play than its precursor, *Gameday*. Computer AI even remembers plays.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 24)

Need for Speed
Pub & Dev: EA
While the 3DO version of this racing sim was slow and disappointing, the PlayStation version is fast, responsive, and arguably one of the best racing titles for the system.
Rating: ★★★★

NFL Full Contact
Pub & Dev: Konami
As 32-bit football games go, this is near the bottom. Muddy graphics, twitchy control, and an engine that would barely pass on a 16-bit platform make this a title to avoid.
Rating: ★★

NFL GameDay
Pub & Dev: Sony
The best PS-X football game of the '95/'96 season. *GameDay* wasn't perfect, but it was enough to scare off *Madden* and to be champion until *GameDay 2* introduced beefier AI, visuals, and game features.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 14)

NHL Face Off
Pub & Dev: Sony
Before the release of *NHL Power Play*, this was the premier PS-X hockey title. It's still fun — and good value at the budget price.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 13)

NHL Powerplay '96
Pub: Virgin Dev: Radical
Saturn's version is easily the best 32-bit hockey game, the PlayStation version doesn't move or control as smoothly. Better than most, but shy of greatness.
Rating: ★★★★

Novastorm
Pub & Dev: Psygnosis
Avoid this like the plague. The last of the forward-scrolling shooters with prerendered graphics Psygnosis was known for, it only deserves to be forgotten.
Rating: ★

Off-World Interceptor Extreme
Pub & Dev: Crystal Dynamics
It's in 3D and fast, but this combination racing/shooter hasn't aged well. But we still like the *Mystery Science Theater 3000*-style heckling during the FMV scenes.
Rating: ★★

Olympic Soccer
Pub: US Gold Dev: Silicon Dreams
There are so many better soccer titles, such as *World Wide Soccer II* for Saturn or even *Goal Storm* on PlayStation. Don't be afraid to rent *Olympic Soccer*, though.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 21)



Olympic Summer Gemes
Pub: US Gold Dev: Silicon Druumu
The odd events (fencing and skeet shooting), set this one apart, but mostly it's the same button-mashing frenzy we're used to from track-and-field sports titles.
Rating: ★★★

Penzer Generel
Pub & Dev: SSI
One of the best PC wargamas of all time and still highly thought of, this version doasn't miss a trick. Be warned, it's all strategy and no action — but nothing beats it.
Rating: ★★★★

Perfect Weapon
Pub: ASC Dev: Gray Matter
This 3D combat adventura takes an alien-abducted fighter through five moons. The shifting camera, ploddy control, and stiff movement make play frustrating at best.
Rating: ★★ (NG 24)



PGA Tour Invitetionel '96
Pub & Dev: EA
Another uninspired 16-bit to 32-bit port from EA, *PGA* offers solid gameplay and functional graphics, but little else. Golf should be quiet and sedate, but not boring.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 12)

Philosome
Pub & Dev: Sony
Straightforward shooters aren't very popular — but no one told Sony. *Philosoma* features nearly every variation of the single most narrow genre. But aren't we bored yet?
Rating: ★★ (NG 13)

PO'ed
Pub: Accolade Dev: Any Channel
While its inventive characters, complex levels, and daring control (backflips?) should be applauded — the basic *Doom*-clone criticism still applies.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 13)

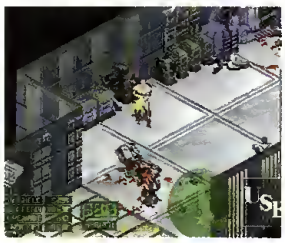
Power Baseball
Pub & Dev: Konami (Jupan)
Konami never released this big-head, little bodies baseball title in the U.S., thank goodness. Gameplay is weak, and graphics are dull. It's not worth your time.
Rating: ★ (NG 5)

Power Move Pro Wrestling
Pub: Activision Dev: Yuke's Co
Released in Japan a year ago as *Toukon Retsuden*, *Power Move Pro* features great graphics. But with no familiar characters, a lot of wrestling's theater and glitz is lost.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 14)

Power Serve 3D Tennis
Pub: Ocean Dev: SPS
Typical of many first 32-bit attempts, Ocean's tennis game represents a giant leap for graphics, and one small stumbling step (or one step back) for gameplay.
Rating: ★★ (NG 12)

Primal Rage
Pub & Dev: Time-Warner
Oooh, fighting dinosaurs! This 2D brawler got by for a while with its stop-motion reptiles, but now it looks old, the gameplay is tired, and the genre has moved on.
Rating: ★★

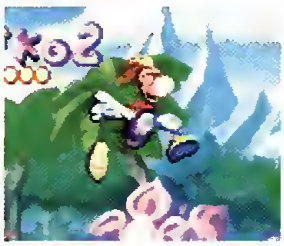
Project Overkill
Pub & Dev: Konami
Blood, blood, and more blood. *Project Overkill* and offers a mindless isometric 3D shooter complete with squishy sounds. It's OK if you liked *Loaded*.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 23)



Psychic Detective
Pub: EA Dev: Colossal Pictures
There's an interesting mystery, but five hours of FMV, non-existant interaction, constant frustration, and the worst structure ever devised. This isn't a game, it's a dare.
Rating: ★

Raiden Project
Pub: Sony Dev: Seibu
We all bought 32-bit consoles so we could play 2D sidescrollers, right? No? Oh well. Then pass up this solid, but unexciting, arcade port of two *Raiden* games.
Rating: ★★ (NG 5)

Reymen
Pub & Dev: UbiSoft
Rayman looks too cute to be real, but this 2D side-scroller offers about 10 times more challenge than the average 32-bit game, even if it started life on Atari's Jaguar.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 10)



Resident Evil
Pub & Dev: Capcom
Taking the *Alone in the Dark* motif (prerendered background, polygon characters) to the extreme, Capcom scores with this spooky adventure game. Awesome.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 17)

Resurrection: Rise 2
Pub: Time-Warner Dev: Mirage
The original *Rise of the Robots* was a bad 2D fighting game; this sequel is worse, if only because it's one the main reasons why so many people are prejudiced against 2D.
Rating: ★

Return Fire
Pub: Time Warner Dev: Silent Software
This two-player videogame version of capture the flag (with tanks and assault choppers) is superb fun and an excellent conversion of the 3DO classic.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 13)

Revolution X
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Ragu
A light-gun game when there wasn't a light gun available for PlayStation? This shooter (featuring Aerosmith) was popular in the arcades, but this conversion is abysmal.
Rating: ★

Ridge Recer
Pub & Dev: Namco
A technical tour de force when released (a scant six months after development commenced), the lack of track variety means this doesn't age well.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 4)

Ridge Racer Revolution
Pub & Dev: Namco
See *Ridge Racer*? This is the same thing with a new track and a rearview mirror. It's still not the game it could have been, however, and doesn't score any higher.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 13)

Road Rash
Pub & Dev: EA
The same motorcycle racing game that EA's been selling for years. It's kinda fun zapping rivals with cattle prods — but the only thing *Road Rash* does with any speed is grow old.
Rating: ★★ (NG 15)

Robo Pit
Pub: THQ Dev: Altros
Build your own robot and fight other robots. An entertaining — and surprisingly cute — two player game, *Robo Pit* is a lot of fun.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 22)

Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV
Pub & Dev: Koei
Koei has been perfecting its strategy engine for years. But *Romance*'s complexity and lack of visual reward can be intimidating.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 18)

Shellshock
Pub: US Gold Dev: Core
Similar to *Thunderstrike* — but in a tank — *Shellshock* offers the chance to wreak explosive havoc on evil tarronsts in all manner of urban settings. It's tough, but just good enough to warrant persevering.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 13)



Shockweve Assault
Pub & Dev: EA Studios
Featuring the original 3DO shooter and the *Operation Jumpgate* expansion pack, *Shockwave*'s alien-blasting fun gets old faster than its FMV cut scenes.
Rating: ★★ (NG 15)

Silverload
Pub: Vic Tokai Dev: Millunium
On PlayStation this is as good as graphic adventures get. A Western/Horror theme makes for an often thrilling adventure.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 18)

rating

SimCity 2000
Pub & Dev: Maxis
Build and expand a city, earning tax revenues while fighting off disasters. Yes, it's the same old game, but it's undeniably a classic and a worthy purchase.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 23)

Skeleton Warriors
Pub: Playmates Dev: Naversoft
With its 2D sprites in a 3D side-scrolling environment, there's not much to get excited by in this action title, except that it looks terrific and really is kind of fun.
Rating: ★★★

Slam 'n' Jam
Pub: Crystal Dynamics Dev: Left Field
A basketball game reminiscent of Konami's *Run 'n' Gun* arcade game, Crystal's effort is crippled by an aging graphics engine and a lack of real players.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 15)

Soviet Strike
Pub & Dev: EA
This 32-bit strategic rescue mission shooter has nearly photo-realistic topographies and nonintrusive FMVs, but where's the revolution in gameplay?
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 24)



Space Griffon
Pub: Atlus Dev: Panther
A poor *Doom* clone featuring plodding mechs and no sense of excitement whatsoever. The tedious plot only serves to prove that *Doom* games don't need no steenking stories.
Rating: ★ (NG 14)

Space Hulk
Pub: Electronic Arts Dev: Krisalis
It ain't just a *Doom* clone — *Space Hulk* manages to be something new. With multiple viewpoints and impressive level design, it packs a punch.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 21)

Spot Goes to Hollywood
Pub: Virgin Dev: Burst
A boring and predictable "adventure" takes Cool Spot of 7-Up fame through the plots of well-known movies. A frustrating lack of mobility adds to the pain.
Rating: ★ (NG 24)

Starblade Alpha
Pub & Dev: Namco
It's got a true 3D environment, and this version of the arcade shooter even adds texture maps to the polygons, but it's still track-based and no fun at all.
Rating: ★

Starfighter
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Studio 3DO
A planet-skimming and space flight combat sim which didn't look bad originally on 3DO looks less than spectacular on PlayStation. It ain't bad, but overall it's just lackluster.
Rating: ★★★

Star Gladiator
Pub & Dev: Capcom
Animated backgrounds and flashy counter-moves make this 3D fighting challenge exciting. Efficient and fast play, but no magical or groundbreaking action.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 24)

StarWinder
Pub & Dev: Mindscape
Fast racing and spinning make this futuristic race a wild ride. But, even with the studio-quality audio and challenging course, *StarWinder* is no *Wipeout*.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 24)

Steel Harbinger
Pub & Dev: Mindscape
Become *Steel Harbinger*, a half-human half-steel female mutant in a Combat G-string, firing plasma rifles at killer alien pods in this unique and well-rendered 3D world.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 24)

Street Fighter Alpha
Pub & Dev: Capcom
With *Street Fighter Alpha 2* in current release, buying this now would be plain dumb, but if you're a fan of 2D brawlers, you probably own it already anyway.
Rating: ★★★

Street Fighter: The Movie
Pub & Dev: Capcom
The *Street Fighter* series takes a useless side road to using digitized sprites of characters pulled from the useless movie. A major misstep all around.
Rating: ★★

Street Racer
Pub: UBI Soft Dev: Vivid Image
A plethora of visible and hidden characters and tracks make this 32-bit ride as much fun as *Mario Kart* and *Micro Machines*, which inspired it. Awesome execution.
Rating: ★★ (NG 24)

Striker
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Raga
With its action at the pure arcade level, stiff control, and miserable graphics, *Striker* is plain insulting soccer.
Rating: ★

Tecmo Super Bowl
Pub: Tecmo Dev: Tecmo
You could argue that Tecmo's football titles have evolved since its 8-bit days — but you wouldn't sound convincing if you did. Miserable graphics, suspicious control: bad.
Rating: ★

Tecmo World Golf
Pub & Dev: Tecmo
Sure, there's a hundred courses (1,800 holes), but with its barely passable, 16-bit era graphics, and shoddy control, even the most fanatical golf junkie should steer clear.
Rating: ★

Tekken
Pub & Dev: Namco
Namco's take on *Virtua Fighter* impressed some and left other's flat. But it was generally better on PlayStation than the arcade, and sold like hot cakes.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 7)



Tekken 2
Pub & Dev: Namco
Again, *Tekken* is better on PlayStation than in the arcade. Hands down this is the best fighting game on PlayStation, and for some it even challenges *VF2*, especially with the variety of characters and battle modes.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 20)

Tempest X
Pub: Interplay Dev: High Voltage
Time-tested *Tempest* is now even better, complete with light-sourced, animated, texture-mapped webs, new tracks, and trippy melt-o-vision effects. A real winner.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 24)

Tetris Plus
Pub: Jaleco Dev: The Tetris Company
The *Plus* part is the addition of a versus mode and an adventure mode, in which you arrange the blocks to create a path for a tiny onscreen guy to escape through.
Rating: ★★★

Theme Park
Pub: EA Dev: Bullfrog
For a strategy game revolving around building an amusement park, this game isn't amusing enough. Building rides is fun, but the economic side drags.
Rating: ★★★

Thunderstrike 2
Pub: US Gold Dev: Core
One of the better helicopter flight sims, it looks as good now as it did when released. It's a little short on the number of missions, but while it lasts, what a rush.
Rating: ★★★★

Time Commando
Pub: Activision Dev: Adeline
More 3D characters on a 2D background,. This action has nothing on *Resident Evil*. It looks good, but it's repetitive, the control is twitchy, and it never quite takes off.
Rating: ★★★

Tobal No. 1
Pub: Sony Dev: Dream Factory
This smooth 3D fighter wins big with innovative characters and gameplay, an intuitive interface, unrestricted movement, and speed. Only flaw: its AI is too beatable.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 24)

Tokyo Highway Battle
Pub: Jaleco Dev: Bullet Proof
It's good, but not great. This highway racer with a wide selection of cars is a worthy rival to *Ridge Racer* (but *Ridge Racer* was never that good in the first place).
Rating: ★★★ (NG 22)

Top Gun: Fire at Will
Pub & Dev: Spectrum Holobyte
Despite the weird control in this flight "sim," (it's actually more of an arcade title), this film-based title grows on you if you stick with it, but it's still not that great.
Rating: ★★ (NG 20)



Total Eclipse Turbo
Pub & Dev: Crystal Dynamics
Imagine a texture-mapped, true 3D *Space Harrier* with all the fun removed. This game is OK, but the lackluster control and repetitive levels grow tiresome, quickly.
Rating: ★★ (NG 10)

Triple Play '97
Pub & Dev: EA
Although the play mechanics of Konami's *Bottom of the Ninth* might be slightly better, *Triple Play*'s wealth of stats and licenses make it the more complete sim, and a gem.
Rating: ★★★★

Twisted Metal
Pub: Sony Dev: Single Trac
One of the first 3D driving games, *Twisted Metal* grabbed headlines, but proves Eugene Jarvis's contention that a 3D world filled with enemies isn't automatically a great game.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 13)

Viewpoint
Pub: EA Dev: Visual Concepts
Based on the award-winning Neo Geo isometric shooter (remember *Zaxxon*?), this 32-bit overhaul is a slow, maddeningly difficult, outdated dinosaur of a game.
Rating: ★ (NG 13)

VR Soccer
Pub: Interplay Dev: VR Sports
While it could have been better, it's not the disaster we expected. The animation is fairly smooth and control is competent, but it's no *FIFA '96*.
Rating: ★★★

V-Tennis
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Tonkin House
It's in 3D, but there's so little variety to the gameplay you might as well be playing *Pong* — except that *Pong* has a better sense of pace. Don't volley here.
Rating: ★★

Warhawk
Pub: Sony Dev: Single Trac
Woefully short (only six levels), this otherwise superb airplane combat game offers players an expenmental VTOL plane in which to wreak 3D polygon-based havoc.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 13)

WipeOut
Pub & Dev: Psygnosis
The fantastic racing game that first showed what the PlayStation could do, this game is still fantastic, even with *XL* released. It belongs in every PlayStation library.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 11)



Williams Arcade Greatest Hits
Pub & Dev: Williams
It's got *Defender*, *Stargate*, *Joust*, *Robotron*, *Bubbles*, *Sinistar*.... They're all arcade perfect circa 1981. Ah, nostalgia...
Rating: ★★★★

Wing Commander III
Pub: EA Dev: Origin
With its sprawling storyline, easy-to-control flight engine, and loads of FMV, *WCIII* has a lot of flash for a space combat sim, but the structure is starting to wear thin.
Rating: ★★★

World Cup Golf
Pub: US Gold Dev: ARC
The gameplay is so realistic and simple, and the interface so smooth, it makes you all the more disappointed there's only one course on the disc.
Rating: ★★★

Worms
Pub: Ocean Dev: Team 17
It's derivative of the earth-shattering *Lemmings*, but *Worms* is still the PlayStation's best puzzle game. The irony is that Sony didn't want it.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 19)

WWF Wrestlemania
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Williams
It's based on William's *MK* engine, but *WWF* is more fun — it doesn't take itself so seriously. Not as graphically realistic as *Power Move Pro*, but full of slapstick.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 12)

X-Com UFO Defense
Pub & Dev: Microprose
A port of Microprose's strategy/combat PC hit, *X-Com* is great. Despite not maximizing the PS-X's graphic or sound capabilities, this has gameplay in spades.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 14)

Zero Divide
Pub: Time Warner Dev: Zoom
Back when every 3D brawler was exciting, *Zero Divide*'s giant robots, mechanical weapons, and hanging-off-the-edge-of-the-arena antics impressed. They don't anymore.
Rating: ★★ (NG 14)

Zoop
Pub: Viacom
Dev: Hookstone/Panelcomp
Action puzzle games should be simple but addicting; *Zoop* is complicated but kind of compulsive. A "8" level game for its genre, it may suck you in, but its no classic.
Rating: ★★★

In 2096 Having a Bomb Strapped to You is a Sport...Want to Play?



The Reactors

Drop the crystal in an opponent's reactor to drain his Kill-Clock.

The Power-Ups

Hi-Jumps, Crystal Bombs, Mercuries, Mag Boots & more.

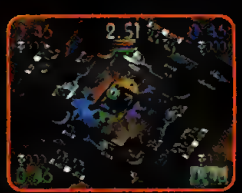
The Kickers

Kicking these rotates the chamber 90 degrees.

The Crystal

Drop it in your reactor to increase your time.

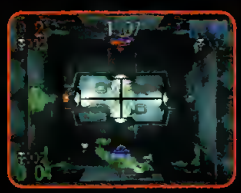
Compete to the death against up to 3 players over the network.



Your arena is a rotating chamber... Turn it left. Turn it right. Turn the wall into a floor.



Your goal is survival... In this multiplayer deathmatch, it's every man for himself.



Your opponent is time... Because when your clock hits zero, you're cooked.

BLAST CHAMBER

The 3-D Rotatable Deathmatch

Now available on MS-DOS® CD-ROM, PlayStation™ Game Console and Sega Saturn™.

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EVERY SEGA SATURN GAME PLAYED, REVIEWED, AND RATED

Yes, it's true: Over 130 Sega Saturn games, reviewed and rated by NG's staff. Check page 168 for reviews of new Saturn releases



Each game is rated out of a maximum of five stars. Here's what each of the scores signifies:

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ **Bad**
Crucially flawed in design or application

Alien Trilogy
Pub: Acclaim
Dev: Probe
Not inferior to the PlayStation version, *Alien Trilogy* on Saturn is a solid first-person perspective *Doom*-clone with explosive action, light puzzle-solving, and good extras.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 23)



Alone in the Dark
Pub: T•HQ Dev: I•Motion
Actually *Alone in the Dark II*, this version (the first on Saturn) doesn't always choose the best camera angles, but overall it's a solid, action-based graphic adventure.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 20)

Astal
Pub: Sega Dev: inVision
Making full use of Saturn's color palette, *Astal*'s vibrant look and feel make it an attractive side-to-side platformer, though gameplay is all too familiar.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 09)

Baku Baku Animals
Pub & Dev: Sega
A cute, "falling bricks" puzzle game in which players match food to animals. Average graphics but addictive gameplay make this the best Saturn puzzler.
Rating: ★★★★



Bases Loaded '96: DoubleHeader
Pub & Dev: Jaleco
Once players experience this game, they will wish the Major League was still on strike. This legless sim will make you appreciate *World Series* all the more.
Rating: ★

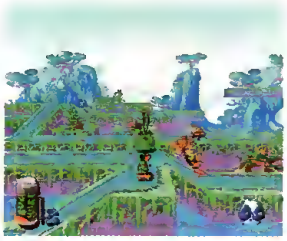
Battle Arena Toshinden Remix
Pub: Sega Dev: Takara
A surprise remix of the PlayStation 3D fighter, *BATR* is fun — and now with added cinematics and a new boss. But it's not as easy on the eye as its PS-X twin, and nowhere near the standard of *VF2*.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 15)

Battle Monsters
Pub & Dev: Naxat Soft
A mediocre fighting title with gory, predictable moves — even the choppy FMVs are embarrassing. Neo-Geo 2D fighters are more interesting.
Rating: ★★ (NG 09)

Blockfire
Pub & Dev: Sega
This is a good attempt at a helicopter flying game, but it fails simply because it tries to achieve everything. Occasional graphic brilliance and lots of action indulges gamers, but only for a while.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 12)

Bubble Bobble with Rainbow Islands
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Taito
Simple and addictive (like *Mario Bros.* and *Dig-Dug*), *Bubble Bobble* and its sequel *Rainbow Islands* are classic non-scrolling arcade games, in which players must blow bubbles to ensnare creatures.
Rating: ★★★

Bug!
Pub & Dev: Sega
Originally acclaimed by Sega's marketing team as Saturn's new platform star, *Bug!* shares Gex's cynical humor, adding rail-based 3D platform movement to the classic platform formula. No thanks.
Rating: ★★ (NG 09)



Bust-a-Move 2: Arcade Edition
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Taito
A different spin on the *Tetris* model, in which players must pop descending strands of colorful balloons. Not groundbreaking, but fun — in a "it's fun shooting bubbles" way.
Rating: ★★★

Casper: The Movie
Pub: Interplay Dev: Fun Com
A year after the film, this graphic adventure game for beginners is as likeable as "the friendly ghost" himself. Some nice transparency effects highlight the visuals.
Rating: ★★★

Center Ring Boxing
Pub & Dev: JVC
It could have been called *Virtua Boxing*, but it's not worthy. While players can customize their polygonal pugilists, the slow action in this ring fails to excite.
Rating: ★★

Clockwork Knight
Pub & Dev: Sega
A polygon platform game packing lots of charm but surprisingly unevolved, side-to-side gameplay. This game shows off none of Saturn's capabilities and little innovation from Sega's designers.
Rating: ★★ (NG 04)



Clockwork Knight 2
Pub & Dev: Sega
Essentially a new and improved *Clockwork Knight*, this sequel features scrolling in and out of the background for an added 3D feel not found in the original. If you like the first, you'll like this too.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 11)

College Slam
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Iguana
Slam is enjoyable by default, because it borrows Williams' *NBA Jam* engine for this two-on-two hoop game. Substituting unknown schmoes for the NBA pros, however, just ain't a smart move.
Rating: ★★

Congo The Movie: The Lost City of Zinj
Pub & Dev: Sega
Unfortunately, this *Doom*-esque game with a cross-market movie promotion is just a formulaic first-person shooter. Yet another movie tie-in that sucks.
Rating: ★★ (NG 19)



Corpse Killer: Graveyard Edition
Pub & Dev: Digital Pictures
From the now defunct DP, this FMV shooting-gallery pits players against an island of zombies. Cheesy graphics and extremely repetitious gameplay — only B-movie fans will get any enjoyment from it.
Rating: ★

Creature Shock: Special Edition
Pub: Data East Dev: Argonaut
Long on FMV and short on gameplay, this first-person shooter features great rendered graphics but drags with a low-grade, point-and-click shooting interface.
Rating: ★

Criticom
Pub: Vic Tokai Dev: Kronos
This 3D fighting game (on a par with *Rise of the Robots*) looks great but lacks control. These polygonal fighters aren't worth their real-time light-sourced effects.
Rating: ★

Cyberia
Pub: Interplay Dev: Xatrix
Originally on the PC, this action/adventure features sharp rendered graphics but lacks console-quality control. Neither the puzzles nor the on-rail flight sequences are particularly gratifying.
Rating: ★★

Cyberspeed
Pub & Dev: Mindscape
A futuristic racer that's trying to be *WipeOut* (but is nowhere near as fun), *Cyberspeed* locks the player's vehicle onto a cable and sets it off like some high-speed ski gondola. Still, the soundtrack rocks.
Rating: ★★

D
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Warp
A cult favorite, Kenji Eno's *D* is a totally rendered graphic adventure with a spooky plotline, good story development, and decent puzzle elements.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 16)



Derius Geiden
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Taito
Not new by any means, but full of old-school flavor, this colorful 2D side-scrolling arcade shooter pits players' ships against a wide array of enemies and giant robotic space-fish. A welcome blast from the past.
Rating: ★★

Dark Legends
Pub & Dev: Data East
A mediocre 2D fighter, *Dark Legends*' best features are its good use of Saturn's color palette, larger than normal characters (these guys are big), and smoothly scaling backgrounds.
Rating: ★★ (NG 11)

Daytona USA
Pub & Dev: Sega
One of the most popular arcade driving games ever, Saturn's *Daytona* is unfortunately mutilated, with glaring pop-up, and no multiplayer options. Solid gameplay, powerslides, dented cars, and speed, however, make it awesome fun.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 07)



Daedalus
Pub: Sega Dev: Micronet
As part of the endless wave of *Doom*-style titles, *Daedalus* delivers little impact. It does, however, feature an eerie soundtrack and intriguing graphics.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 07)

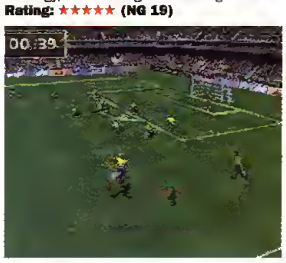
Decathlete
Pub & Dev: Sega
With a high polygon count, Sega delivers a gorgeous *Olympic Games* sports title with 10 complex and varied events, four difficulty levels, and a Hall of Fame record list. Button-mashing fun.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 22)

Defcon 5
Pub: Data East Dev: Millennium
An adventure game in which players defend a space station. A strategy element keeps it interesting, but never exciting.
Rating: ★★★

Double Switch
Pub & Dev: Digital Pictures
Better described as an "interactive movie" than a videogame, *Double Switch* stars Debbie Harry and Corey Haim in a repetitive, FMV whodunit.
Rating: ★★

Earthworm Jim 2
Pub: Playmates Dev: Shiny
Essentially the same game as the Super NES and Genesis classics, but with added color and depth, *Earthworm Jim 2* is a hilarious, platform romp the way you used to love 'em.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 18)

FIFA '96
Pub: Electronic Arts Dev: EA
Considered one of Saturn's finest soccer sims, this title features recognizable players and teams, is fast, complex, full of strategy, and has a great learning curve.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 19)



Fighting Vipers
Pub & Dev: Sega
Though *Fighting Vipers* looks like a *VF2* clone, it's actually a lot more — the most notable additions being the introduction of interactive backgrounds and armor.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 24)



F1 Challenge
Pub: Virgin Dev: Sega
Originally released as *F1 Live Information* in Japan, this racer offers all the teams and tracks of the real F1 circuit. But the mediocre graphics and gameplay aren't up to par with *Daytona* or *Sega Rally*. It's certainly no match for PlayStation's *Formula 1* from Psygnosis.
Rating: ★★★

F1 Live Information
Pub & Dev: Sega (Japan)
As above, but with footage from Japanese TV.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 14)

rating

Frank Thomas "Big Hurt" Baseball
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Iguana
Extraordinary graphics and great-looking batters (bolstered by a full Players' Association license) keep this game from sinking under the weight of poor gameplay.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 21)

Galectic Attack
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Taito
A fast action game with die-hard gamers in mind, *Galactic Attack* is a shooter in the simplest terms. Highlights include no slowdown, screens full of enemies, and an overall feeling of competence.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 15)



Galaxy Fight
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Sunsoft
It looks and plays like an average Neo-Geo fighter, except that the backgrounds are sci-fi based with the traditional animé characters outfitted in futuristic costumes.
Rating: ★★

Gex
Pub & Dev: Crystal Dynamics
This platformer made a solid, humorous debut on 3DO, but seemed tired by the time it reached Saturn. *Gex* is witty, but the gameplay follows the same old formula of jumping and grabbing power-ups – with the occasional teleport thrown in for luck.
Rating: ★★★

Ghen War
Pub: Sega Dev: Jumping Jack Software
With a soundtrack that heightens when action intensifies, enough variation in its mission objectives, and clever enemies abounding, *Ghen War* is a solid RPG/strategy game.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 19)



Golden Axe: The Duel
Pub & Dev: Sega
Golden Axe: the Duel features standard 2D fighting with characters from the *Golden Axe* universe. Fun but uninspired, 2D and unfortunately all too predictable.
Rating: ★★ (NG 20)

Gothe
Pub: Sega Dev: Micronet
A solid strategy title with decent graphics, *Gotha* is packed with varying, intricate levels presenting new challenges each time. A fair stab at the genre.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 07)

Gren Cheser
Pub: Sega Dev: Naxtech
Hovercraft racing that never lives up to *Wipeout*'s level of graphic lushness or smooth gameplay. Track narrowness can be disturbing, but the action is quick and draw-in isn't as bad as *Daytona*. Fun, but not a killer app.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 09)

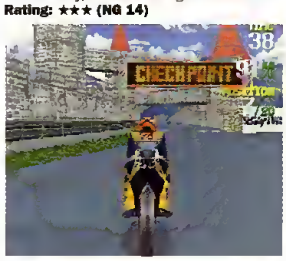
Greatest Nine Beseball
Pub: Sega (Japan) Dev: InVision
Great control over batters and pitchers, a generous amount of camera angles, and all-around solid execution of baseball in videogame form make *Greatest Nine* a must-have among baseball titles.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 09)

Guerdian Heroes
Pub: Sega Dev: Treasure
Successfully blending fighting tactics with traditional side-to-side action, *Guardian Heroes* is a beautiful bi-genre game. Six people can play simultaneously.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 17)



Gun Griffon
Pub: Sega Dev: Gama Arts
A first-person, 3D mech game with eclectic missions and bizarre weapons. It looks good, controls well, and would be a four-star game if not for its brevity and poor pacing.
Rating: ★★★

Heng-On GP '95
Pub & Dev: Sega
Sega — the king of arcade racers — offers *Hang-On GP '95*, a motorcycle racer with three tracks (with long and short options), cool scenery, and a blistering frame rate.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 14)



Hi-Octane
Pub: EA Dev: Bullfrog
Not one of Bullfrog's best games, *Hi-Octane* is essentially a less-than-successful port of a mediocre PC game. Stick with *Wipeout*.
Rating: ★★ (NG 17)

High Velocity
Pub & Dev: Atlus
High Velocity provides high-speed racing, no draw-in or slowdown, and a split-level two-player option. A good racing game.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 14)

The Horde
Pub & Dev: Crystal Dynamics
This strategy game (with some sword-swinging battles) first appeared on 3DO. It's not all bad, and dunng the FMV, actor Kirk Cameron plays the dork-in-the-tights.
Rating: ★★

Impact Recing
Pub: Acclaim Dev: JVC/FunCom
Putting equal emphasis on racing and shooting other cars, this poor man's *Ridge Racer* (albeit with weapons) lacks intensity. Stick to *Sega Rally* or *Wipeout*.
Rating: ★★

In the Hunt
Pub: T•HQ Dev: Irem/Imagineer
A good old fashioned Japanese 2D side-scrolling shooter — these games haven't really changed in 15 years. This time you're in a submarine, the bosses are huge, and there's occasional slowdown.
Rating: ★

Iron Storm
Pub: Working Designn Dev: Sega
Iron Storm is a complex, addictive, and challenging war simulation with 500 selectable weapons, 50 historic battles, and U.S., Japanese, or German forces. Give war a chance, ladies and gentlemen.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 18)

Johnny Bazookatone
Pub & Dev: US Gold
This clever platformer soothes gamers who are nostalgic for the 16-bit side-to-side platform days. It's not anything new for the genre, but it's filled with fast-shooting action and some good puzzles.
Rating: ★★ (NG 15)



Krazy Ivan
Pub: Sega Dev: Psygnosis
A perfectly middle-of-the-road first-person mech fighter. Fight one or two mechs at a time, while making use of numerous camera angles and many fighting styles.
Rating: ★★ (NG 24)

Last Glediators
Pub & Dev: Kaze Co.
A pinball game with four tables, *LG* features jackpots, bonuses, skill shots, and includes extra sensitive flipper control for those who sure play a mean pinball.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 11)

Legend of Oasis
Pub: Sega Dev: Ancient
Legend of Oasis continues with what made *Beyond Oasis* so entertaining — a blend of puzzle challenges, frequent action sequences, and balanced story. An adventure well worth taking.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 21)

Loaded
Pub: Interplay Dev: Gremlin
Full of bells and whistles, blood and gore, fact action shooting and destruction, *Loaded* is a shallow game highlighting mindless, repetitive gameplay. Fine for some, but ages quickly for others.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 22)

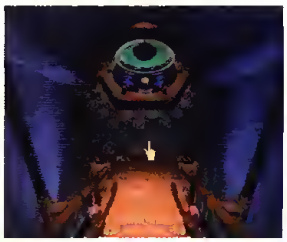
Magic Carpet
Pub: EA Dev: Bullfrog
More than just *Doom* on a flying rug, *Magic Carpet* brings with it an airy, mystical quality. Strategy is required when collecting "Mana" in this massive (70 levels) game.
Rating: ★★★★

Mansion of Hidden Souls
Pub & Dev: Sega
Essentially a sequel to the Sega CD original, *Mansion of Hidden Souls* is a big graphic adventure, featuring talkative ghosts and a scary mansion to explore.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 12)

Minnesota Fats: Pool Legend
Pub & Dev: Data East
Ugh! Wrapping some poorly written and acted FMV clips of *Minnesota Fats* around what is nothing more than a top-down, 16-bit pool game, is a damn waste of packaging. Sorry, Fats — you deserved better than this.
Rating: ★

Mortal Kombat II
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Williams
In a nutshell, *MK2* is an arcade-perfect translation of the version many gamers consider the best of the MK series.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 16)

Myst
Pub: SunSoft Dev: Cyan
A slow, "multimedia" puzzle game for people who don't play games — this sucks, mainly because it's diverted so much attention from more deserving projects. Avoid.
Rating: ★★ (NG 08)



NBA Action '96
Pub: Sega Dev: Gray Matter
Looking to match the quality *NBA* titles of the PlayStation, this one controls well but falls short in the visuals and AI departments. Wait for *Live '97* instead.
Rating: ★★

NBA Jam TE
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Iguana
It's the two-on-two, rough-and-rumble basketball game from the arcade. Delivering the high-flying dunk with the cream of the NBA crop still hasn't lost its edge.
Rating: ★★★

The Need For Speed
Pub & Dev: EA
Certainly as fast, but not as crisp as the PlayStation version, *NFS* puts drivers in real high-end sports cars and unleashes them on the open road. A better racer than most.
Rating: ★★★★

NFL Quarterback Club '96
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Iguana
With enhanced graphics, features, and an up-to-date roster, *QB Club '97* puts the *'96 Club* in the back of the closet. So there's really no point investigating this one.
Rating: ★★

NFL Quarterback Club '97
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Iguana
In its second 32-bit iteration, *QB Club '97* is improved visually and controls well, but lacks the depth of play found in *Madden '97*.
Rating: ★★★

NHL All-Star Hockey
Pub: Sega Dev: Gray Matter
It's got multiple perspectives, many options, useful stats, real players, and cool video clips, but it's missing (sadly) gameplay. Try *NHL Powerplay '97* instead.
Rating: ★★ (NG 12)

NHL Powerplay '96
Pub: Virgin Dev: Radical Entertainment
With fantastic graphics, smooth gameplay, and exceptional AI, *NHL Powerplay* competes with PlayStation's *Faceoff* and wins. Brilliant attention to detail and a great sense of the sport make this a winner.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 20)



Nights
Pub & Dev: Sega
A bizarre innovation in game design, *Nights* must be played to be understood and loved. Yuji Naka's latest masterpiece wins for conjuring up a believable sense of flight.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 22)

Night Warriors: Dark Stalkers' Revenge
Pub & Dev: Capcom
A stylish fighter packed with all the standard Capcom trademarks: lush animation, fast-moving 2D characters, and great gameplay. OK, so it's basically just *Street Fighter 2* in disguise — but it's fun.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 18)

Off-World Interceptor
Pub & Dev: Crystal Dynamics
Filled with fast, off-road driving action (actually, you're on a different planet), *Off-World Interceptor* blends driving and shooting elements, but fails to create anything great.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 12)

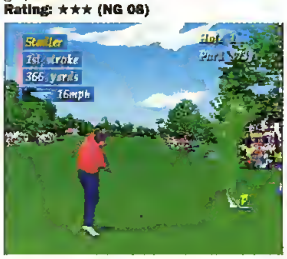
Olympic Soccer
Pub: U.S. Gold Dev: Silicon Dreams
A mediocre soccer title with acceptable graphics and decent gameplay. If you want all the official World Cup teams and line-ups, *FIFA* is your game. Otherwise *Worldwide Soccer 2* is Saturn's best.
Rating: ★★★

Penzer Dragoon
Pub & Dev: Sega
One of the first games to show off Saturn's graphic prowess, *Panzer Dragoon* is the logical evolution of *Space Harrier*. A novel view-change feature and some classy enemies make this an interesting game.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 06)



Penzer Dragoon II Zwei
Pub & Dev: Sega
More of the same frantic action that made the original such a blast, *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei* further builds on its *Space Harrier* origins with dazzling graphics. A unique Saturn must-have.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 19)

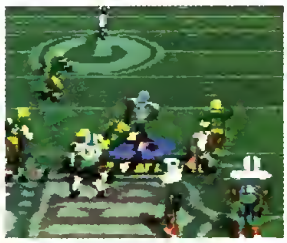
Pebble Beech Golf Links
Pub & Dev: Sega
Filled with FMV instruction, plaid-panted digitized golfers, and an impressive array of options, *PBGL* offers up to six-person gameplay and shows off Saturn's hi-res graphic mode.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 08)



Primal Rage
Pub & Dev: TWI
2D fighting dinosaurs (complete with finishing moves) offered many laughs in the arcade, but console ports of the game have been less than satisfactory.
Rating: ★★

Quarterback Attack
Pub & Dev: Digital Pictures
FMV enters the sports genre with moderate success. Use a cross-hair to throw passes, and learn from former Bears coach Mike Ditka. A non average football title that's, well, kinda avarage.
Rating: ★★★

Quarterback Club '97
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Iguana
In its second 32-bit iteration, *QB Club '97* is improved visually and controls well, but lacks the depth of play found in *Madden '97*. Not the best PlayStation football game by any means, but far from the worst.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 24)



Reymen
Pub & Dev: Ubi Soft
For a 2D, platform-hopping sidescroller, *Rayman*'s cute, kiddy graphics clash with the tough gameplay. Despite the dorky (OK, "cute") visuals, the title retains many innovative qualities.
Rating: ★★★

Revolution X
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Rage
Never mind that you're saving a bunch of past-their-prime rockers (Aerosmith). This port of what was a barely-passable arcade light-gun game sucks.
Rating: ★

Riglord Saga
Pub: Sega Japan Dev: Micro Cabin
Following the Japanese tradition of employing interactivity mainly as a means of ushering along a predetermined story, this is still a solid RPG. It looks great, too, and has plenty of depth.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 11)

Rise 2: Resurrection
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Miraga
The original *Rise of the Robots* sunk to new lows in the gaming world. This sequel brings 18 pre-rendered robots to the one-on-one fighting arena and still falls so very, very, far behind the curve that it's laughable.
Rating: ★

Road Rash
Pub & Dev: EA
This motorcycle racing/combat game has grown seriously tired over the years. While still enjoyable, there's no excuse for the continued lack of innovation.
Rating: ★★

Robo-Pit
Pub: Kokopelli Dev: Altron
Build your own robot and then pit it against another in a fight for superiority. There are 100 different one-player enemies and an innovative two-player split-screen mode. Requires strategy and creativity, and a little craziness.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 23)



Robotica
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Broderbund
A *Doom*-clone that replaces the demons and monsters with ultra-boring robots — and spectacularly fails to excite. *Robotica* fails on more levels than the game provides.
Rating: ★

Romance of the Three Kingdom IV: Wall of Fire
Pub & Dev: Koei
Another installment of the military simulation series that Koei has been tweaking over the years. Certainly not for action-only gamers, but a solid strategy game for fans of the genre.
Rating: ★★★

Saturn Bomberman
Pub & Dev: Hedson (Japan)
Saturn's 10-player version of the popular action game requires two multitaps, 10 controllers, and a *really* large TV for the full effect. The game was perfected in *Super Bomberman 2* for Super NES, and hasn't gotten any better since.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 23)



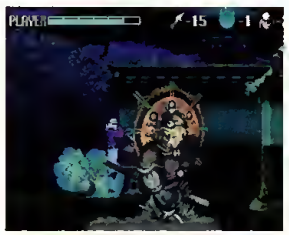
Sega Rally Championship
Pub & Dev: Sega
A brilliant arcade-perfect port of Sega AM3's arcade racing classic. Amazing physics, never-ending powerslides, surprising subtlety, and four distinct courses make this a key Saturn title. Eat your heart out Namco.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 14)

Shanghai: Triple Threat
Pub & Dev: Activision
Quite possibly the best Mah Jong game available for home consoles. If you're into this Asian tile game, this is a must-have. Those who have never heard of it, however, will be confused and probably frightened.
Rating: ★★★

Shellshock
Pub: US Gold Dev: Core
A tank shooter that delicately balances simulation with arcade play, *Shellshock* succeeds honorably. Realistic effects and 25 extremely challenging levels add up to sheer shooting goodness.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 20)

Shining Wisdom
Pub: Working Designs Dev: Sonic!
Sega's first 32-bit update of its classic RPG series makes no use of 3D effects, but if you love RPGs enough, you'll be satisfied with its many explorable lands and high replay value.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 18)

Shin Shinobi Den
Pub & Dev: Sega
Fans who like the familiar run-and-slash style of this martial arts game made popular on Genesis will like this 32-bit adaptation.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 10)



Shockwave Assault
Pub & Dev: EA
Combining the original 3DO *Shockwave* with the *Jumpgate* mission disc, *Assault* brings home an antiquated and repetitious terrain-skimming cockpit shooter. Ridding the earth of spidery aliens has to be more fun than this, right?
Rating: ★★

SimCity 2000
Pub & Dev: Maxis
A carbon copy of the Mac and PC city-building simulation, *SimCity 2000* for Saturn is essentially only recommended to people who don't own a computer.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 12)

Skeleton Warriors
Pub: Playmates Dev: NaverSoft
A side-scrolling action game with interesting 3D tricks (such as enemies scaling in and out of the background and foreground), this title has beautiful graphics and is kinda fun, but the slashing combat is all too familiar.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 16)



Slam 'N' Jam 96
Pub: Crystal Dynamics Dev: Left Field
This five-on-five arcade-style basketball game craves an NBA license, but instead you get just Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Magic Johnson as the frontmen. Good fun, its sprite-based graphics look dated.
Rating: ★★★

Soler Eclipse
Pub & Dev: Crystal Dynamics
This sequel to *Total Eclipse* made some improvements over the original, but still, this behind-the-ship space-tunnel shooter ain't all that. With no sign of *Descent* coming, stick with the *Panzer Dragoon* games.
Rating: ★★

Space Hulk: Vengeence of the Blood Angels
Pub: EA Dev: Krisalis
This strategic first-person corridor-shooter puts the player in command of multiple soldiers hunting aliens. More shooter than *Defcon 5*, but less action than *Doom*, *Space Hulk* is a well-balanced blend.
Rating: ★★★

Ster Fighter
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Studio 3DO
One of the last original 3DO games, this chase-view 3D shooter offers terrain-skimming and outer-space battles for a total of 60 levels. Not altogether bad, but not all together either.
Rating: ★★

SteamGear Mash
Pub & Dev: Takara
A moderately fun overhead shooter packed with cute characters, tons of clever puzzle features, and some sophisticated environments. Makes some use of 3D playing fields, but far from revolutionary.
Rating: ★★

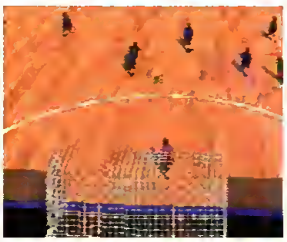
Street Fighter: The Movie
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Capcom
A betrayal of true *Street Fighter* fans, this game uses FMV characters from the movie of the same name. With no notable new moves and lousy animation (who cast this crew?) this is easily forgettable.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 11)

Street Fighter Alpha
Pub & Dev: Capcom
Departing from the bitmapped sprites that made *Street Fighter* instantly recognizable around the world, this offers similar gameplay with an enhanced anime look.
Rating: ★★★

Street Fighter Alpha II
Pub & Dev: Capcom
Faster animation, three new characters, new moves, "cross-overs," and a custom combo attack make this the best 2D fighting game of the year. Classic, fighting gameplay.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 24)

rating

Striker
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Rage Softwars
Extremely frustrating control and abysmal graphics essentially sink this poor excuse for a soccer game.
Rating: ★ (NG 21)



Teme
Pub & Dev: Tengen
Marble Madness in reverse, *Tama* enables gamers to control the course in which a ball must be maneuvered from point A to point B. Weird and obscure.
Rating: ★★ (NG 08)

Tetris Plus
Pub: Jaleco Dev: The Tetris Company
The original *Tetris* is as close as videogames have ever got to simple perfection — and all the extra bells and whistles are largely superfluous. (Two-player mode is kinda cool, though.)
Rating: ★★★ (NG 23)

Theme Park
Pub: EA Dev: Bullfrog
Another solid strategy/simulation from Bullfrog (the company that brought you *Populous*) but not one of its best. Build theme parks by managing budgets, implementing smart design, and listening to your clients. Fun, but never great.
Rating: ★★★

3D Baseball
Pub & Dev: Crystal Dynamics
One of the first 3D baseball games, the polygonal players look real, stand like they do in real life, and move to motion-captured perfection. In all, it's a shame that the gameplay is so average.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 24)

Three Dirty Dwarves
Pub & Dev: Sega
A side-scroller that builds within the genre without pushing it forward, *Dwarves* is chock full of little surprises, challenges, and obstacles that keep the gamer guessing. Sure, it's just a dressed up *Streets of Rage*, but it's fun.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 23)

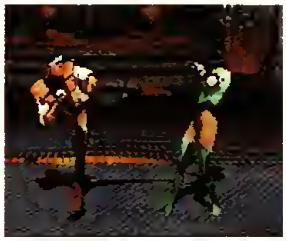
True Pinball
Pub: Ocean Dev: Digital Illusions
Accurate physics and detailed graphics lift this game from the frothy standard of similar pinball sims, while four pinball tables give the game depth and variety.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 22)

Thunderstrike 2
Pub: US Gold Dev: Core
Makes use of Saturn's 3D capabilities, rotating camera angles, small and large enemies, and combines them with smart action-packed helicopter features. Great mission objectives and artillery.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 15)



Torico (Gekkamugenten-Torico in Jepen)
Pub & Dev: Sega
A stylish graphic adventure created in the style of Warp's *D*, *Torico* is a must-have for all graphic adventure fans. Sublime CG graphics, effective attention to detail, and a great story make this a winner.
Rating: ★★★★

Ultimate Mortel Kombat 3
Pub: Williams Dev: Eurocom
More imitative than innovative, *Ultimate Mortal Kombat* is essentially a lazy alteration of *MK3*'s play mechanics and characters. Dull, dull, dull.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 19)



Velore Velley Golf
Pub: Vic Tokai Dev: T&E Soft
It looks and plays like any second-rate golf game, but this fantasy course comes with castles and holes on top of mountains, and special power-up swings. Different, weird, and ultimately below average.
Rating: ★★

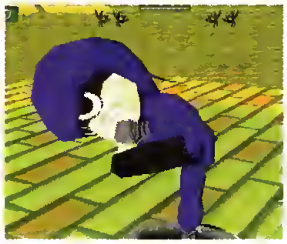
Virtuel Hydlide
Pub: Atlus Dev: T&E Soft
What could have been a strong early magnet for RPG fans turns out to be a poorly thought-out, over-the-shoulder RPG with little going for it.
Rating: ★★ (NG 10)

Virtuel Volleyball
Pub & Dev: Imagineer
A complete mishap. A fluke, flail, flop. Forget it. Not even fun for the most die-hard volleyball fan. Frankly? Not even a flash in the pan. Phooey.
Rating: ★ (NG 11)

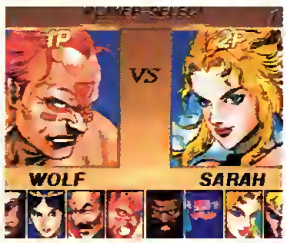
Virtue Cop
Pub & Dev: Sega
Virtua Cop is a clean, polygon-based light-gun shooter with on-the-fly graphic rendering and seamless efficiency. A good reason to buy the Stunner (you'll also use it for *Virtua Cop 2*).
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 14)

Virtue Fighter
Pub & Dev: Sega
Sega AM2's seminal fighter features polygon characters, a huge range of fighting styles, and tremendous depth. Ring outs, bloodless fighting, and skill over memory feature prominently here. *VF Remix* and *VF2*, however, are better.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 04)

Virtue Fighter Kids
Pub & Dev: Sega
Super-deformed *VF2* characters whale on each other in this remake. The timing is different, but the moves and fighting are the same. It's bright, comical, and is as packed as *VF2* with months of gameplay.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 23)



Virtua Fighter Remix
Pub & Dev: Sega
What *Virtua Fighter* should have been, *Remix* corrects the original's 3D glitches, while adding texture maps, a higher polygon count, and some gameplay tweaks. Better.
Rating: ★★★★



Virtue Fighter 2
Pub & Dev: Sega
Sega's adaptation of its own coin-op classic is almost flawless. Saturn *VF2* is easily the best 32-bit fighting game, and is reason alone to seriously consider buying a Saturn. Saturn *VF3* probably won't be much better.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 14)

Virtue Racing
Pub & Dev: Time Warner
An DK conversion of Sega's excellent polygonal racer with additions not present in the original (there's a new circuit mode, new cars, and new tracks).
Rating: ★★★ (NG 12)

Virtuel Open Tennis
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Imagineer
In looks, it's second only to *Power Serve 3D Tennis*, but it's *Virtual Open Tennis*'s gameplay that really shines. Still, it's far from perfect, and computer AI is tough.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 21)



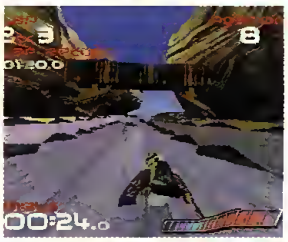
Wicked 18
Pub: Vic Tokai Dev: T&E Soft
One of the few humor-based golf games (if not the only one), *Wicked 18* implements goofy, unrealistic par-four golfing. Possibly an acquired taste.
Rating: ★★★

Wing Arms
Pub & Dev: Sega
Wing Arms offers WWII fighters with mounted machine guns — a welcome break from the norm. However, its arcade approach is ruined by noticeable draw-in.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 15)



Winning Post
Pub & Dev: Koei
This horse-racing sim enables players to bet on races (there's no actual riding). Dull in comparison to Koei's other sims.
Rating: ★★

Wipeout
Pub: Sega Dev: Psygnosis
Cool techno music, mind-warping tracks, great speed, tight control, and an overwhelming visual style account for this excellent, futuristic hovercraft racing game. Almost as good as PlayStation's.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 15)



World Cup Golf: Pro Edition
Pub: US Gold Dev: ARC Developments
A subtle interface, several modes of play, excellent graphics, effective sound effects, and easy-to-learn game mechanics make this a solid one-course golf title.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 17)

World Series Baseball
Pub & Dev: Sega
Saturn's first Major League Baseball game is essentially a conversion of Japan's *Greatest Nine* (with some U.S. ballparks and all the Major League players included). Still good, but now with outdated rosters.
Rating: ★★★★

World Series Baseball II
Pub & Dev: Sega
An improvement over the original (the arcade style pitching is toned down) with every major league stadium represented.
Rating: ★★★★★ (NG 24)



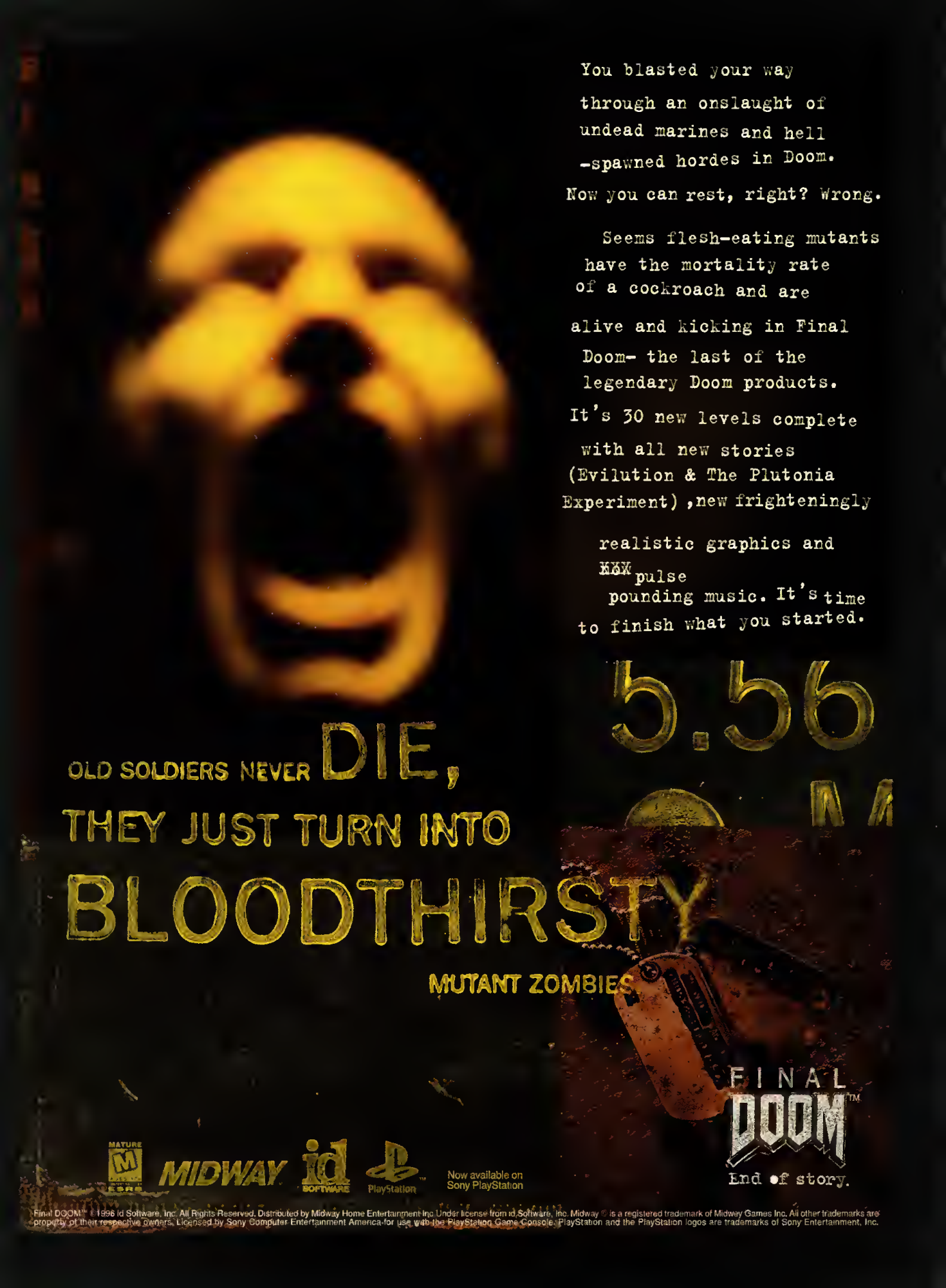
Worldwide Soccer
Pub: Sega Dev: InVision Interactive
Cool music, solid gameplay, and great graphics make this soccer game a winner.
Rating: ★★★ (NG 08)

Worldwide Soccer 2
Pub: Sega Dev: InVision Interactive
Simply, this is the best soccer game for Saturn — if not the best videogame soccer anywhere. Classic stuff — a must buy.
Rating: ★★★★★

Worms
Pub: Ocean Dev: Team 17
Whimsical strategy gaming reminiscent of *Lemmings* (but with turn-based combat), this 2D puzzler is a welcome change of pace from the norm.
Rating: ★★★★ (NG 18)

WWF Wrestlemenie: The Arcade Game
Pub: Acclaim Dev: Williams
Featuring the *WWF*'s most colorful characters, this plays similar to *Mortal Kombat* but with some outrageous linking combos — truly capturing the flare and the theater of pro wrestling.
Rating: ★★★

X-Men: Children of the Atom
Pub & Dev: Capcom
Great for Marvel fans, this 2D arcade fighter is full of brightly colored graphics and features nearly all the X-Men favorites, (including Iceman, Wolverine, and Cyclops).
Rating: ★★★ (NG 18)



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EVERY N64 GAME PLAYED, REVIEWED, & RATED



OK, so there are only eight games for Nintendo 64. Some of them are great, some of them suck. We just wish there were more

Each game is rated out of a maximum of five stars, with no half marks. Here's what each of the scores signifies:

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ **Bad**
Crucially flawed in design or application

Cruis'n USA
Pub: Nintendo Dev: Rare
One of the original N64 arcade showpieces finally comes home, but should've stayed put. Choppy frame rate, sluggish control, little noticeable variation between tracks, and the worst soundtrack in years make this racing game a great — no really, it's almost perfect — doorstop.
Rating: ★



Killer Instinct Gold
Pub: Nintendo Dev: Rare
KI2 has been upgraded for N64 with its nicely designed, fully polygonal 3D backgrounds, a training mode, and a few surprise extras, but at its heart it's still the same *Mortal Kombat*-inspired, 2D sprite-based brawler it's always been. Not our cup of tea — and part of a dying breed.
Rating: ★★★

Mortal Kombat Trilogy
Pub & Dev: Williams
Easily the best *MK* available for home consoles — it's missing only a few frames of animation, but includes a total of 28 fighters from all three installments, plus every background, move, and finishing move. It's still old and tired, but the best.
Rating: ★★★

Pilotwings
Pub: Nintendo Dev: Nintendo/Paradigm
Functioning better as a N64 hardware demo than an actual game, this pseudo-flight sim is initially impressive, with gorgeous graphics and a few interesting challenges. Over time, however, the lack of any significant action simply renders it dull.
Rating: ★★★★ **(NG 21)**



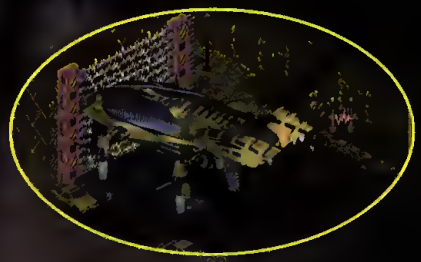
Shadows of the Empire
Pub: Nintendo Dev: LucasArts
After a fantastic first stage attacking AT-ATs on snowspeeders, this title becomes a weak *Tomb Raider* clone with blasters and Stormtrcopers, and never gets that good again. Not bad, just not what we hoped.
Rating: ★★★



Shoji Chess
Pub: Nintendo Dev: Seta
What can you say? It's the world's most powerful home videogame system — and Nintendo launches it with a chess game. A good chess game, maybe. But a chess game.
Rating: ★★

Super Mario 64
Pub & Dev: Nintendo
The N64's flagship title takes the classic 2D challenges of the *Mario* series and perfectly translates them into a fully interactive, 3D environment. Dead-on control and a huge world make this the best videogame ever.
Rating: ★★★★★ **(NG 21)**

Waverace 64
Pub & Dev: Nintendo
This jet-ski racing game puts other racing titles, on any vehicle, to shame. Intuitive control, perfect wave mechanics, numerous tracks, and an addictive trick riding mode make this an instant classic.
Rating: ★★★★★ **(NG 25)**



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WE EXPECT YOU TO BE IN THREE.

... and here



... and here.

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LIVE COMMENTARY

Tecmo Super Bowl's announcer gives true play by play commentary, not just an occasional phrase or two. If perhaps you think he's an idiot, you always have the option of turning him off.

TOURNAMENT MODE

Over the years Tecmo Super Bowl players have let us know about the friendly competitions which sometimes take place. This new version has





a built in tournament mode for a total of 8 players playing one on one till one of the players wins the tournament. Chips and drinks are sadly not included.

DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Knowing that some people haven't been playing Tecmo Super Bowl for years we've included 3 difficulty settings. Easy, Normal and Hard. Our football game gives you the ability to grow with the game. Internally we call this a screen save 'cause you don't have to throw a rock through the TV screen when you get frustrated with the game.

INSTANT REPLAY

If you want to analyze the last several seconds of play, simply pause the game and start the instant replay. In addition you can go frame by frame to fully analyze all of the action. Then again, you may not want to see the interception again, and again, and again, and again.

NEW RECORDS & STATS

Tecmo's stats engine has always been unsurpassed. This year we've added the ability to keep the stats from any player in any position even if it's only for 1 play during the entire season. Here's your one and only chance to re-write the record book.

NEW PLAYBOOK

From the game play menu, you now have access to the entire playbook for the immediate play. ...for more plays than you can possibly want, use, call, send-in, modify, change, and/or run as the case may be.

VARIABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS

Ordinary football games sometimes have weather conditions. So far as we know, Tecmo Super Bowl is the only





game to actually change the weather during the game. So one minute it could be raining, and then it could start snowing, or then again stop or actually it's too variable to give you all of the possible scenarios.

MORE, MORE AND MORE

We've tried to highlight some of the most important new features of Tecmo Super Bowl for the Sony PlayStation. Obviously there are more features than we can possibly list. Tecmo Super Bowl is one of the most realistic and sophisticated football simulators ever created. Aside from all of the technical improvements, think about the following:

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Tecmo's Deception answers (There are no correct answers... Welcome to Tecmo's Deception)

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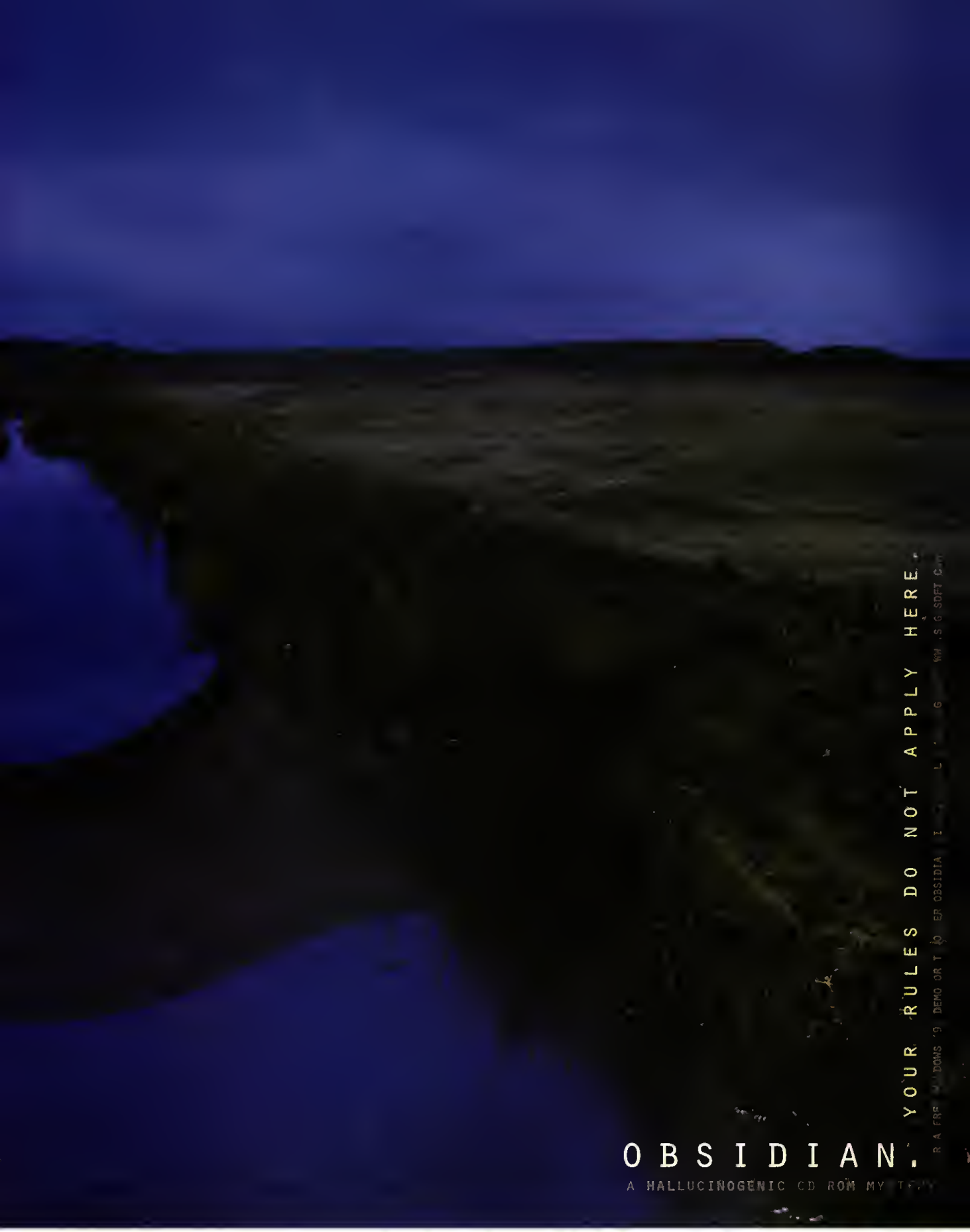
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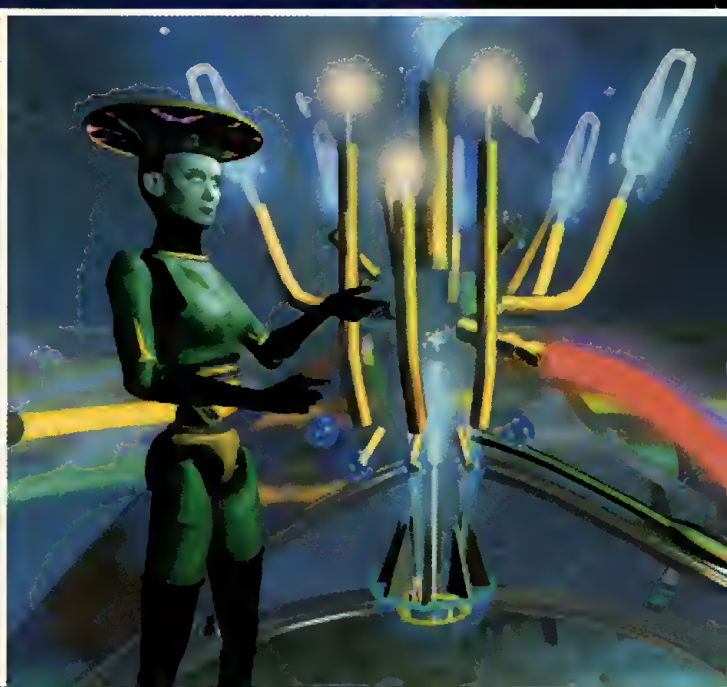


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Tomorrow's best games, revealed today

This month, **Next Generation** is proud to present a packed preview section, the highlights being the U.S. exclusive of *Super Mario Kart 64* for Nintendo 64, and Virgin's *Propaganda* for PC and PlayStation.

But that's not all: we also bring you exclusive coverage of one of the most action-packed titles of '97, Activision's *Apocalypse*. We also look at KOEI's stab at a 3D fighting game, *Sangoku Masou* and Interplay's gorgeous new RPG, *Forgotten Realms*, a game designed by — would you believe doctors? Then comes Sony's *PaRappa the Rapper* (just read it), and while Matsushita may have been keeping mum about M2, that hasn't stopped Warp showing us *D2*.

We also have a candid talk with Jordan Mechner (of *Karateka* and *Prince of Persia*, fame) and look his latest, *The Last Express*. Finally, take a look at what every **Next Generation** Disc Edition reader gets for free, *Christmas Nights*, a smashing Yuletide variation of the Saturn classic.

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A new 3D game from a group of designers who think *Tomb Raider* is *slow*

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145 Propaganda PC, PS-X
The new game from Virgin's new development house, Burst

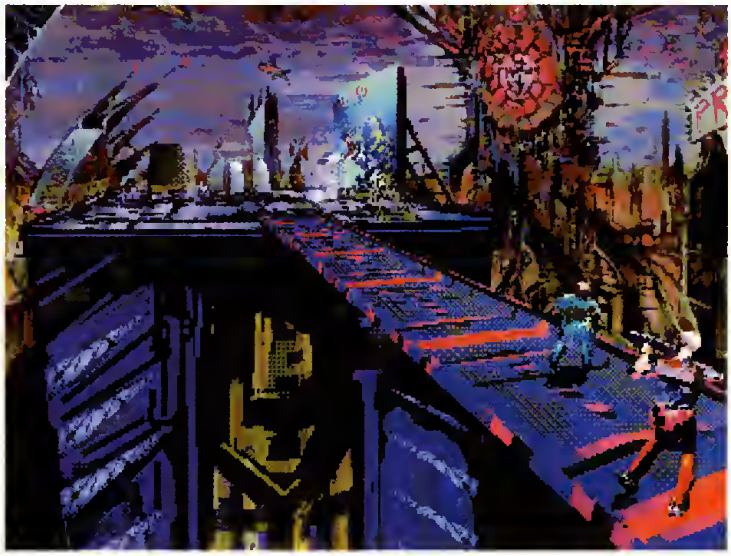
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Presenting the first look at Nintendo's long awaited, 64-bit update of its 16-bit classic

Next Generation OnLine, http://www.next generation.com/

Apocalypse

A dark future, a 3D world, a buddy, and nanotechnology — is this the game with everything?



Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Activision**
Release Date: **September '97**
Origin: **U.S.**

The focus here is less on careful jumping and puzzle solving than on defeating large numbers of enemies through brute force

When Activision held a "press day" just before the the holiday season, there were — as is the norm for such events — very few products showcased that hadn't been seen before. There was one surprise however. Accompanied by hardcore music, a pair of designers gave an extremely early glimpse of a thoroughly kinetic, third-person, 3D action game. As the onscreen polygonal character rolled, spun, and blasted at enemies, the potential was obvious. The game was *Apocalypse*.

"We're going for something that's never been done before," says *Apocalypse*'s Director, John Spinelli, "that is, a character-based action game. By that I mean I would consider games like *Mario 64* or even *Tomb Raider* more character-based *exploratory* games. Now, I think these are spectacular in their own right, but the issue is really action. In a total action game like *Doom* or *Quake* you've never seen the character you control, because before now they haven't had the design or the technology to really make it sing."

Indeed, while the wild athleticism displayed by *Apocalypse*'s onscreen character easily puts him on a physical par with *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft, the emphasis here is less on carefully executed jumps and puzzle solving than on overcoming large numbers of enemies through brute force. While this might seem at first to be a conceptually easier approach, from the technical side, it's actually a more intimidating proposition. The simple act of getting multiple characters on screen in a 3D environment, let alone having them behave in an interesting fashion, is a serious hurdle.







No point in talking, just let 'em have it

The *Apocalypse* team seems to be taking it in its stride. "In fact," Spinelli continues, "we've taken it two steps ahead: we're creating a virtual buddy game, emulating the buddy movies you'd see in the theatre. You have a partner, who's computer controlled, and the two of you have to work together in an action-oriented environment to overcome the forces of evil."

In a dark future where society is ruled by the forces of



If action is what you want — and who doesn't? — then *Apocalypse* could be a game worth waiting for



Dark, entropic futures are a cliche, but the future in *Apocalypse* is positively grim. These early screens give a good indication of where the designers went to go

"We're creating a 'virtual buddy' game, emulating the buddy movies you'd see in the theatre"

John Spinelli, Art Director

Science and Religion, a dark overlord, The Reverend, has harnessed stolen nanotechnology to reign supreme over both worlds. Not one to fool around, the Reverend plans on using his new power to resurrect the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. He's obviously serious.

The player's character, a hapless mercenary, finds himself imprisoned in the same cell as the molecular engineer from whom the Reverend stole the technology in the first place. Using a combination of high-end nanotech and straightforward violence, the two escape and begin fighting across the twisted urban landscape to stop The Reverend from succeeding and ushering in Judgment Day a little early.

"The nanotechnology angle allows us to do a lot of fun things you wouldn't normally see in an action game," claims Chad Findley, Lead Designer. "We're trying to go as far out as possible with the weapons. So for example, some of the weapons will actually transform enemies from one state to another — from a leaping hellhound into a puppy — or just rearrange their DNA completely and turn them into a puddle of plasmic ooze."

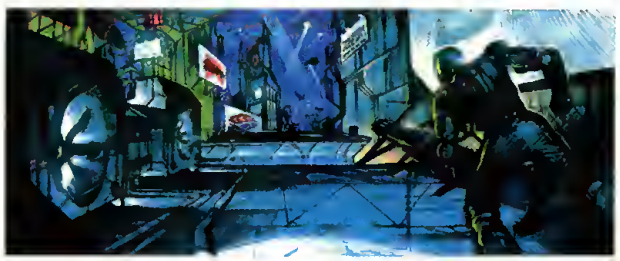
"In fact," Spinelli continues, "in the prison cell scene at the start of the game, the first thing your partner does to try and explain how nanotechnology works is to change the prison sink into a gun." He laughs, "And then of course the two of you are off."

PlayStation's morphing and MIME effects are used in combination with the bare minimum of prerendered cut scenes to make transformations possible. "We're obviously big John Woo action fans," Spinelli says, "and as much as he can set up a huge action scene and back it with some story, fine,

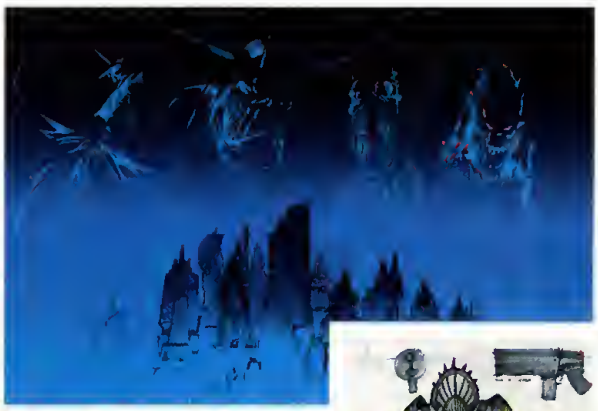
Pesky Critters

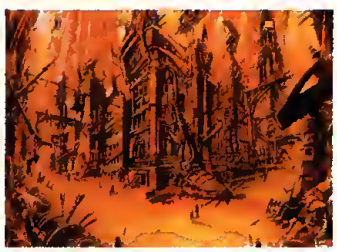
Activision's Chad Finley explains how Apocalypse's enemies shape up:

"Our enemy AI relies on C functions with adjustable variables, but it's also designer-scriptable. So we can have one enemy looking at another enemy — if one pops up and starts firing, he can work with him. Or one can start commanding them all. Your partner also looks at what you and everyone else is doing — everyone works together."











It's not exactly Judgement Day according to Revelations, but there's no denying the production design is both detailed and atmospheric

ng alphas







***Apocalypse* is action-packed, but players won't have to face these insurmountable odds alone. This marks one of the first pure action titles in which players get a computer controlled buddy to help**

but we're never going to let anything get in the way of the action. At the end of the day, we know our audience — we are our audience!"

To this end, the team has developed a new PlayStation wrinkle: asynchronous CD access. "It lets us stream off new animations while we're playing," Findley boasts. "So as you finish fighting a certain room of enemies, it cuts right into a scripted animation without breaking the camera plane, loads up what's next while the animation is playing, and jumps right back into the action without a break."

Apocalypse represents not so much the next step into the 3D future — although exciting new technologies and techniques have been created and applied — but an assimilation of those ideals and an exploration of a different approach. The designers at Activision seem well on their way to being among the first to take the environment for granted and simply get on with the job of creating a game that delivers an experience beyond the "gee whiz" factor of simply modeling everything in polygons.

And they're well on their way to delivering balls-to-the-wall action in the process. ng

"The first thing your partner does to explain how nano-technology works is to change the prison sink into a gun"

John Spinelli, Art Director





It's dark, it's bleak, it's filled with enemies who want to kill you — but, since that's what folks buy a game for, that's not bad at all

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PaRappa The Rapper

This innovative console import title could start a whole new gaming genre — The "Musical"



PaRappa's instructors have distinct rapping styles. The driving instructor — who really puts our hero through his paces — is a Queen Latifah sound-alike



The Flea Market Frog flows with reggae dancehall rhythm. You'll meet him later in the game as you battle each character for use of a restroom

PaRappa's refreshingly positive message is not found in many other 32-bit games

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Sony**
Developer:	**Sony**
Release Date:	**TBA**
Origin:	**Japan**

Occasionally a Japanese title breaks the rules yet manages to work on so many levels that its genius shines (*Bomberman, Tail of the Sun*), and you realize how genre-bound the U.S. is. It's somewhat ironic that this latest Japanese gem hinges on uniquely American music.

Players become PaRappa, the rapper, and must rap their way through a series of adventures to win the heart of Sunny, the object of PaRappa's desire. The game's whimsical characters are designed by children's book author and illustrator Rodney Greenblat. Strangely, PaRappa is a dog, and Sunny is a flower.

At its heart, the gameplay is similar to the electronic game "Simon," — except that the emphasis is on repeating the audio cues — in this case, words — by pressing corresponding buttons at the right musical time, as opposed to simnply remembering an order. It's even possible to break out of the set order and go "freestyle."

The graphics are also deceptively simple. Greenblatt's 2D characters look exactly like paper cut-outs in the 3D environment — indeed, "parappa" is a variant on the Japanese word for "paper thin," enabling the graphic style to conveniently excuse itself as a visual pun. However, the characters are totally charming, and the MIME animation used to keep them bouncing along, with no attempt to hide their lack of a third dimension, only increases the quirky appeal. In each level, PaRappa meets a new rapping mentor (including an onion-headed karate sensei and a Rastafarian frog) and must correctly sing along to complete each undeniably catchy musical number.

One of the more uniquely engaging titles of the last several years, *PaRappa* will doubtless be written off by many jaded gamers as a novelty for kids. But *PaRappa* could do much to widen PlayStation's appeal among more open-minded and non-traditional players as well.





At the recent PlayStation Expo in Tokyo, PaRappa entertained the crowds







Matched with Greenblatt's vibrant visuels, PaRappa's slogan is "i gotta believe!"

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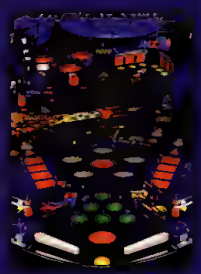




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Sangoku Musou

KOEI stunned attendants of the recent PlayStation Expo in Tokyo by showing a 3D fighting game. But is it any good?



Many moves have trails similar to those in *Soul Edge*, but the play style is totally innovative. The characters have well-detailed costumes; note the lack of obvious joints in the knees, which enables smooth animation

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **KOEI**
Developer: **Omega-Force**
Release Date: **March '97**
Origin: **Japan**

The game runs at a blazing 60fps, the same rate as *Tobal No 1*, but *Sangoku Musou* uses fully textured characters

Since its inception, KOEI has been known for producing mind-numbingly accurate and detailed historical strategy military simulations. While the games have had a loyal cult following (even to the point where KOEI knew exactly how many carts it could sell, making it one of the last developers to still make a profit on the Super NES), they haven't brought the company mass market success or recognition on these shores. With the release of *Sangoku Musou*, that may be about to change.

Sangoku Musou is a 3D fighting game, and while the PlayStation market may seem glutted with such titles, the designers at Omega-Force have placed the game squarely in the middle of a growing trend: weapons-based combat. Several games feature this promising new wrinkle, Square's *Bushido Blade* and Namco's *Soul Edge* among them. *Sangoku Musou* will probably be the second to see release in Japan after *Soul Edge*, but could be the first to be released in the U.S., assuming that Namco follows its standard, sluggish, translation policy.

What's more important than its release date, however, is its quality. The game runs at a blazing 60fps, the same as *Tobal No. 1*, but *Sangoku Musou* uses fully textured characters, a feature *Tobal* lacked. The trade-off is that unlike *Tobal No. 1*, or any other 3D fighting game, the backgrounds are simply 2D backdrops. However, while this may seem potentially crippling, in practice — and with the exception of those in *VF3* — when was the last time anyone paid attention to a backdrop



Blocking is as important a part of the strategy of the game as offense. Radically different, but equally successful, play styles can evolve

ng alphas





The feeling of real weapon combat is excellently captured by the game's innovative fighting style. The special effects are cool, too

while in the heat of combat?

The characters are highly detailed and well textured, and all have weapons, from swords to spears, to pick-axes. In fact, there are few hand-to-hand moves present (we found just a few throws while playing at the Expo). With just weapon-based moves, the game may sound limited, but it's not, thanks to one of the deepest combat systems around.

Instead of various attack moves (high, mid, low or strong, medium, weak) and one block button, there is no block button at all. Thus, blocking a high attack requires executing a properly timed high attack of your own, not simply pushing the block button and watching. This adds an immense amount of depth to the game and enables it to capture the "clang-clang" back and forth feel of fencing (or, presumably, fighting with an ax or spear). Strategy relies not on simply learning moves and combos, but on anticipating and countering opponents moves with equal skill.

If the game can be correctly balanced (and the pre-release version we saw certainly seemed to be heading in that direction), this new twist in gameplay could be a major addition to the fighting game genre. Luckily, the game engine seems strong enough to support it. At 60 FPS, it's fast, and the moves both look fantastic and are quick enough to support the fighting style.

It certainly isn't the kind of game we've come to expect from KOEI, but it looks to have the same quality. And hopefully, this will be only the first step for the company towards a broad new range of equally compelling titles.

ng









These shots can't show the most impressive feature of the game — its fantastic speed and totally fluid animation style

The game captures the "clang-clang" back and forth feel of fencing (or, presumably, fighting with an ax or spear)







Although most of the movas in the game are weapons based, and not hand to hand, like *Virtua Fighter*, there are a huge variety of different moves and combos. The game looks to provide as much depth as any fighter we've seen

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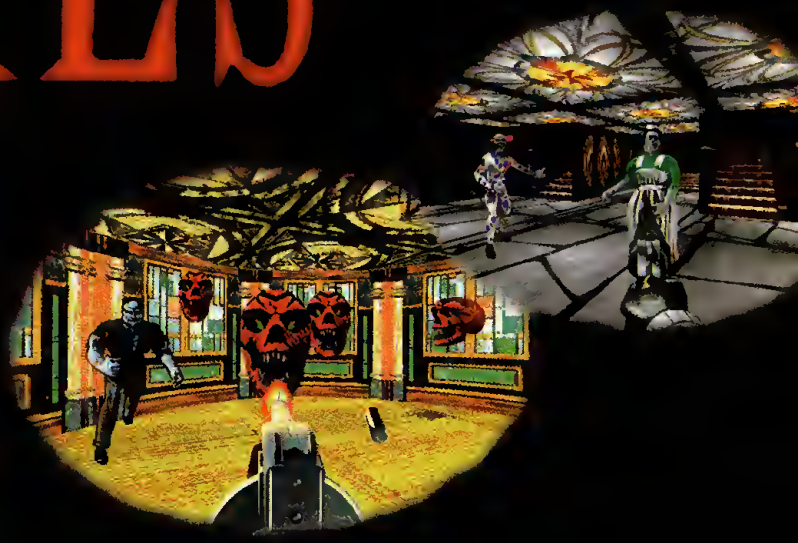


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Power F1

Yet another motor racing sim prepares on the test track. Can it be a winner?

Format: **PC**
Publisher: **Eidos**
Developer: **Eidos**
Release Date: **March '97**
Origin: **U.K.**











During pit-stops, full motion CG animation lends a more dramatic look to the "pit experience" (right). While the screenshots above display interesting top-down camera views of corners on two of the tracks, the gameplay is still racing as usual with behind-the-car views (top left, top right)

As long as there have been sims, gamers have defended their favorite brands of auto racing to the death

Arcade-style games like EA's *Need For Speed* and Virgin's *Screamer* series have widened the PC racing market, but how big the audience is remains questionable. Almost as long as there have been sims on computers, there have been cliques of gamers who would defend their favorite brands of motor racing to the death. Developers such as Papyrus and Microprose have earned cult followings with their respective NASCAR, Indy Car, and Formula titles. Eidos now looks to bite into that fanatical pack of players, throwing its hat onto the track with its own Formula One licensed title.

If a racing sim hopes to recreate the complexity of the entire racing experience (and not just offer arcade thrills) it must have numerous options. Power F1 is no exception, and players can choose between 12 real teams (and thus top drivers such as Michael Schumacher) and race on any of the 17 Formula One tracks such as Silverstone, Monaco, and Suzuka. Beyond the licensed features, players can adjust the number of laps, car damage, tire wear, and weather. Game options boast several practice and competition modes, including a choice of either 12 or 24 car races.

Plus, of course, there's the all-important "modify your car" feature. The usual options for adjusting wings, brakes, and suspension are here, but the game also includes such variables as tire pressure and degree of steer.

The texture-mapped polygonal environments are sharp and the racing control is tight, even in this early version. The recommended system is a P90, but the minimum requirement is a mere 486 with 8MB of RAM. Two players can play in a split-screen mode or via a network or serial link.

As such, if *Power F1* can stay on track, it may innovate by providing a solid racing experience without requiring hardware comparable to that of the real sport. ng







As in most racing sims, sponsor logos are easily recognized on each car

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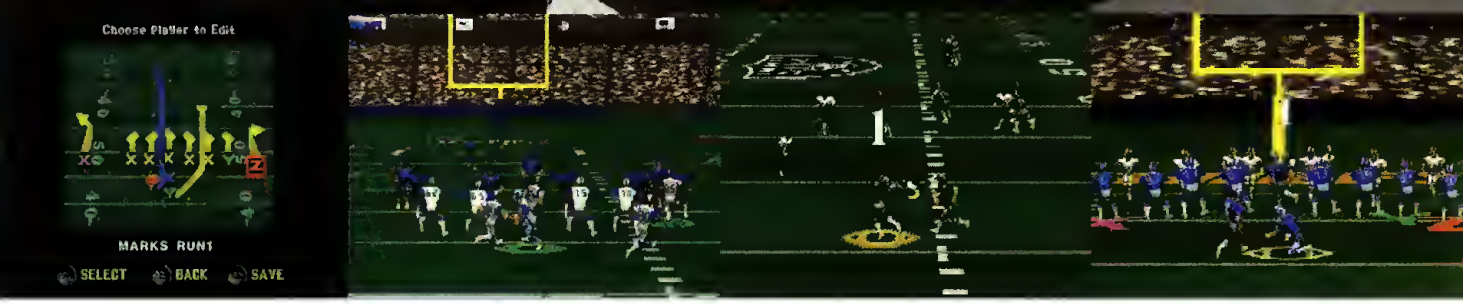
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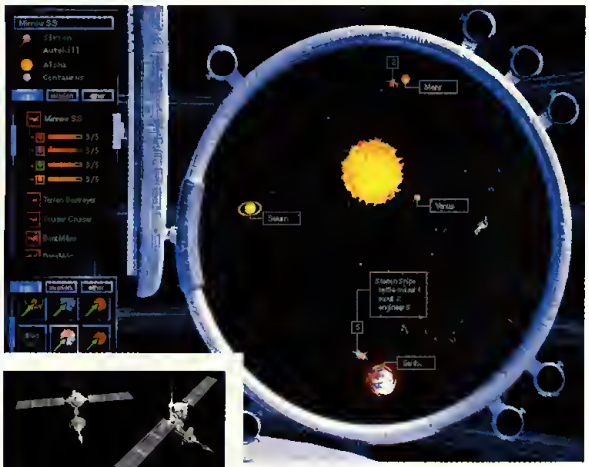




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Galactic Conquest

The re-invention of Studio 3DO continues with a strategy game that's *not* real-time



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Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**The 3DO Company**
Developer:	**Studio 3DO**
Release Date:	**June '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

"This isn't going to be just another lame, boring space game. I personally guarantee it"

Doug Lee, Studio 3DO

Studio 3DO's latest effort is a turn-based game of exploration and battle strategy, akin to *Spaceward Ho!* but with mild RPG elements. It initially comes across like a *Star Control* variant.

Millions of years from now when the universe is dying, the quest begins to find a legendary Cosmic Key, which can unlock a dimensional doorway and allow its possessor to dodge doomsday. However, problems abound: first, 12 alien races are competing to find it, and second, the Key itself is intelligent and doesn't want to be found.

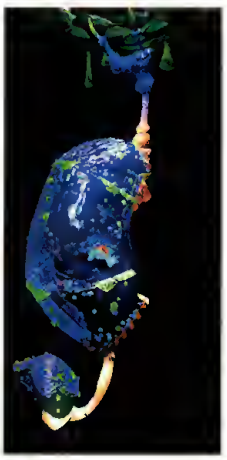
The design team, led by Director Jay London, has opted for a game that's short and sweet, one that lasts four to six hours and quickly captivates players' interest. However, the designers have been careful to ensure the game contains enough variety and random factors that each session is different. There are five playable races and eight non-playable ones, not all of which will be encountered in each game. The races interact with each other, and even share information about how you act, so each different game results in a unique set of evolving alliances.





Ship designs closely mirror tha aliaa racaa that occupy tham





Much of the game hinges on finding and learning to use sixty other artifacts besides the Key, of which only a dozen appear randomly in each game. These confer advantages such as faster ships, more powerful weapons, or odd wildcards that can do things like destroy planets.

Combat takes place in turns. "The best analogy is football," London explains, "you set up a play, watch it run, then set up the next one." Enemy AI is being programmed by AI guru Bruce Wilcox, and the battle scenes use fully polygonal 3D environments.

Promising compulsive gameplay that doesn't tie up weeks of time, *Galactic Conquest* aims for its own niche in the PC game spectrum. It may deserve to find it. ng



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D2

The rumors behind M2's imminent arrival in Japan are fuelled by the unveiling of one of the system's key titles



The level of detail even in these early shots is staggering. Notice how even the objects in the adjacent rooms are still fully rendered (right)





M2's built-in MPEG playback means high quality FMA cut scenes, but given the beauty of the 3D world, hopefully there won't be too many

Format: **M2**
Publisher: **Panasonic**
Developer: **Warp**
Release Date: **1997**
Origin: **Japan**

Kenji Eno's outfit has the talent to outlive its status as *enfant terribles* of the Japanese game industry

Warp's follow-up to its enigmatic FMV adventure, *The D*, is a title of great importance in two respects. First, it will show that either Kenji Eno's team is a flash in the pan or does indeed have the talent to outlive its current status as enfant terribles of the Japanese game industry — and continue its endearingly fresh approach to game design. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, *D2* is the first M2 title to be revealed to the Japanese gaming public.

That Warp released screenshots of the game weeks ahead of Matsushita's intended official unveiling of M2 is odd. Warp is practically the only non-coin-op third-party developer announced for M2, and Matsushita's own titles were expected to be unveiled first.

The majority of M2's early titles will be action/arcade games — developed both internally



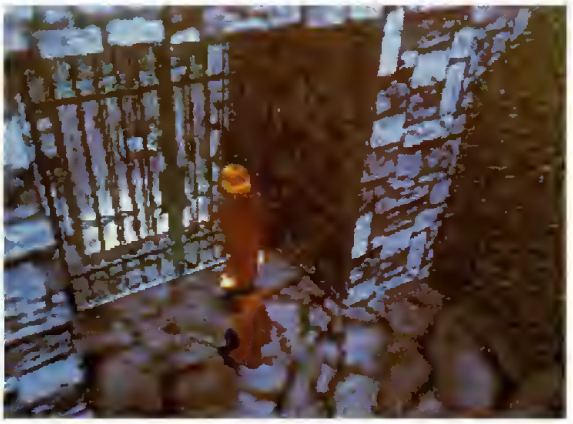
If Warp can marry the extraordinary level of detail in these shots with a fast game engine, then *D2* should prove to be a stunning M2 debut

ng alphas

With a plot that serves up mystery and suspense, you could be forgiven for thinking this was a cerebral affair







The system's fogging effects (top left) provide great atmosphere, while the perspective-correct textures (above) will serve M2 well in comparisons with the PlayStation. A rendered 747 from the game's MPEG intro (bottom left)

at Matsushita and by the likes of Konami and Capcom, which are using M2 as an arcade board — so it is surprising that Warp's more considered and decidedly less flashy title is the first to make an appearance.

The story of *D no Shokutaku 2*, to give the game its full title, is a continuation of the first game. This time, the player takes the role of Laura's son in a highly convoluted scenario outlined in the introductory CGI movie (seen through M2's high-quality MPEG playback). Laura is pregnant and on a flight to Romania when the plane hits a patch of turbulence causing Laura's unborn to disappear and the plane to crash. The baby has been spirited back to a castle in medieval Transylvania by the Devil, to be the child of a widowed Duke who has sold his soul for a son. The baby grows into manhood and fights the devil to save his father. Perhaps it's best to savor the visuals...

All the action in *D2* takes place in and around a castle, and the play perspective looks similar to that of Capcom's *Resident Evil*. However, instead of cutting to prerendered static shots of individual locations, the player and the game camera move in complete 3D space (as in *Mario 64*) with control handled by M2's analog controller. You







Currently, the team still has much work to implement in *D2*, but already impressive sections in the game exist, such as this statue surrounded by realistic foliage. The game's wiry protagonist could use a bit of work, though



Expect to play around with the game's camera to stuaaing effect. Multiple lightsources should creata an uaprecedented level of realism

What isn't known is just how significant *D2* will be in the impending M2 assault

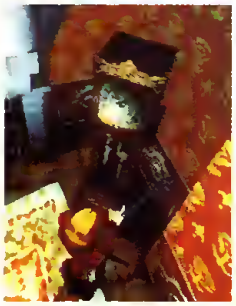
could be fooled into thinking that *D2* is a wholly cerebral affair, but the sword-wielding hero does get into a fair number of duels both inside the vast expanses of the castle and in its surrounding gardens.

Graphically, *D2* is detailed and imaginative, indicating M2's texture-mapping and light-handling capabilities. It can cache many textures, which makes it possible to identify types of wood used in castle furniture. M2's light-handling also shows shadows changing according to time of day. A character's presence in a room also affects light and reflections, and mirror effects look stunning in their detail. More than mere flashy effect, the time of day affects gameplay as well. Certain events occur, and certain actions will be possible, only if the player is in the right place at the right time.

Judging from the screenshots, *D2* seems to have the same dark, dramatic, and intense atmosphere of its predecessor, but with the added bonus of real-time environments, instead of prerendered clips spooled together. A smooth game camera shifts in response to player movement and should give *D2* an atmospheric, cinematic style.

As a showcase of M2's hardware capabilities, *D2* could eclipse even the best of what has been seen so far on the Nintendo 64. But polygons and textures aside, what isn't known is just how significant a role *D2* will play in the impending M2 assault.





Objects (such as this clock) require manipulation, and the taxtures blur (above) when juxtaposed against complex backgrounds

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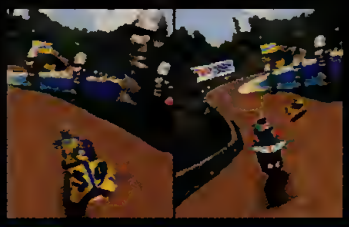
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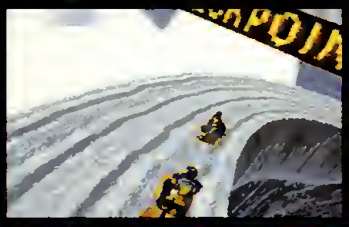
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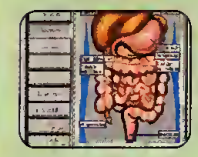


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The Last Express

The designer of 16-bit classics like *Karateka* and *Prince of Persia* returns with a graphic adventure of stunning beauty







Tha artistic designers painstakingly tried to re-create the look of the early 1900s

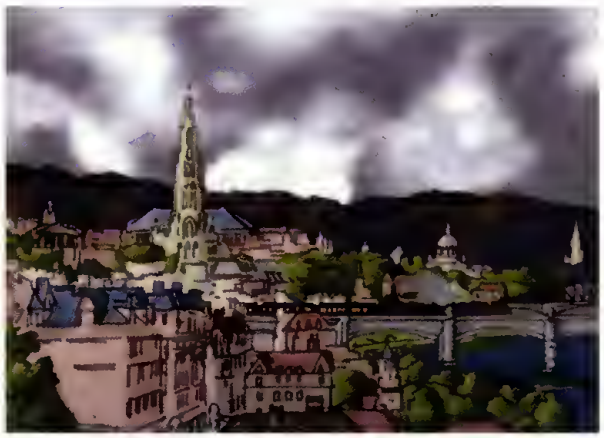
In the game, Cath hopes to discover why it was so important for his friend to be on the train, and why he was subsequently murdered

It may be three years since Jordan Mechner completed *Prince of Persia 2*, but he hasn't been slacking. *The Last Express* is an ambitious new graphic adventure, steeped in mystery and heavily cinematic. For those who remember the melodramatic opening to Mechner's *Karateka* twelve years ago, which rapidly cut back and forth between two onrushing martial arts opponents, this should probably come as no surprise.

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Broderbund**
Developer:	**Smoking Car**
Release Date:	**March '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

The Last Express is set in 1914 at the brink of WWI, the game follows Robert Cath, a young American in Paris. Waiting to depart on the Paris-Constantinople train (the famed Orient Express), Cath's friend Tyler Whitney urgently contacts Cath, telling him to come to the station. Cath rushes to the station, only to find that his friend has been murdered. Finding clues that Whitney's killer must be on the train, Cath takes Whitney's luggage and ticket and assumes his identity, boarding the train at the last minute. Cath hopes to discover why it was so important for his friend to be on the train, and why someone would murder him to keep that from happening.

Game mechanics are what one expects of a modern graphic adventure: while relying on prerendered screens, the entire interior of the famous train has been modeled with a meticulous attention to detail and historical accuracy, and



Stunning graphic beauty and atmospheric detail are hallmarks of the production design in *The Last Express*. The game looks fantastic

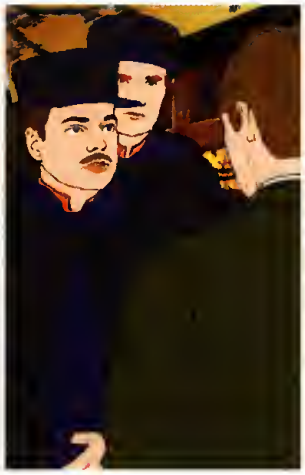




The man who first used rotoscoped animation in a videogame brings it back in *Tha Last Express*

ng alphas











It may be a graphic adventure, but this game emphasizes cinematic action and a brisk pace



An attempt to marry the technical flair of a modern graphic adventure with the structure of an Agathe Christie novel, *The Last Express* has a fighting chance at expanding its genre beyond sci-fi and Tolkienesque fantasy

the animation reflects the art-nouveau style popular in Europe during the period. Using a simple point-and-click interface, players scroll through the scenery with a first-person view.

But the interface has some interesting quirks. While the game doesn't unfold in real time — the action takes place during the three days and nights it takes to reach Constantinople, and real time would cause the game to drag a little — time is still a factor, and events occur around the player in a linear fashion, whether one observes them or not. This is a thematically coherent approach, incidentally, as it nicely mirrors the constant forward motion of the train. This said, the interface does enable the player to turn back the clock and replay events.

As one might expect from Mechner, who introduced rotoscoping into games with *Prince of Persia*, the character animation in *The Last Express* is also rotoscoped. However, in this latest case, converting film (or as it happens, tape) to animated frames has been computerized and, to a certain extent, automated. The process also enables the designers to generate several different views of the same action, giving greater flexibility during the editing.

Overall, the game boasts twice as many animation frames as a full-length animated film and over 30 major characters. It should also offer 40 to 60 hours of gameplay. Plus, having completed the game once, players can try again, following different characters and strings of events for a different experience.

With its detailed artwork, involved storyline, and simple interface, *The Last Express* could follow in the footsteps of recent hits like *The Beast Within* or *The Pandora Directive*, with the difference being those titles relied on FMV of bad actors. Should the animated characters of Mechner's latest prove even more expressive, it would be another coup for the hero of *Prince of Persia*. ng

Overall, the game boasts twice the number of frames of animation as a full-length animated film



From its beginning steeped in mystery to its explosive conclusion (although this isn't the ending), the game keeps the player guessing



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An interview with Jordan Mechner

Jordan Mechner's modest portfolio as a game designer belies the influence *Prince of Persia* exerts on game design, echoing even in such modern classics as *Tomb Raider*. Indeed, it's hard to believe that he's only been directly involved with three titles: the classic Apple II game *Karateka*, *Prince of Persia*, and its sequel. **Next Generation** speaks to the soft-spoken and surprisingly self-effacing producer of *The Last Express*.

NG: It's been a while since your last game. What have you been up to?

Jordan: Well, believe it or not we started this project in '93. After *Prince of Persia*, I took some time off and went to film school, wrote a screenplay, hung out in Europe for a couple of years. But then I guess the itch to get back to computer games just started to eat away at me, so we formed Smoking Car in January of '93, and we just started cranking away on *Last Express*.

NG: Why a graphic adventure? Your other games are action titles.

Jordan: Well, I think even with *Karateka* and *POP*, I was always trying to get a story in there; I tried to mix story and action. But given the capabilities of the Apple II, there was a limit to how much depth and how big a cast of characters you could have.

But part of what excited me about doing this game was the chance to do a big story, and work a level of complexity into the story, and hopefully really develop the personalities of the characters. My aim was to get all that stuff up to the same level you'd have in a film.

NG: So do you see similarities between making games and making films?

Jordan: Oh they're very different in terms of the experience. When you see a film you really love, you look for ways to recapture it: you go to the bookstore and look through film books and find articles on it, go to a record store and buy the soundtrack. These days you can even connect to web sites. But basically, it's all just trying to recapture that experience, trying to get back into that world and be able to explore it. But the thing about computer games — if you can make a game that has that impact on people — is that you can absolutely keep exploring the world.

It's kind of early to tell, but I hope people will pick *Last Express* up again a week later, even after they've solved the game, and start from the beginning and explore and look for things they didn't see at first. That's the beauty of computer games.

NG: So, as a designer, how do you deal with letting the player affect the game without interrupting the flow of the story?

Jordan: Well, that's the heart of it. There's a built-in tension between making a game that's interactive and has a story. The pleasure of a story is in wanting to know what happens next and the satisfaction that comes when you find out what happens next. With a game like this, the goal is to create, to a certain degree, the illusion of interactivity. You want the player to feel that actions really have consequences. Choosing from multiple branches is not fun. You feel like you're on a branching tree just picking different ways to go, and that's not a game. You have to give players the feeling they really are somewhere, like on a train, and that they can walk down a corridor and open any door and see someone walking and follow them. Yet somehow we have to set things so players are always in the same story, and, when they get to the ending, they feel that's the way it should have ended.



"There's a built-in tension between making a game that's interactive but also has a story"

NG: So is there just one "right" ending?

Jordan: Well, the journey takes you from Paris to Constantinople, and that's why I like the train so much as far as the aesthetics of the story go, because no matter what you do, you don't expect to affect the path of the train: it always gets to Vienna at 6:00.

Ultimately, you could say the goal is to get to Constantinople, but in a sense the player's idea of what the goal is keeps changing. When you first board, you want to find out why your friend was killed, then as you find out more about that and learn about the cast of characters, you definitely get another set of desires about what you want to have happen. So most of the other endings mean making choices about that and getting off before Constantinople.

I don't know if you should print this because it kind of gives things away — well, anyway, one of the jokes around our office is that you could make the case that Humphrey Bogart would have been better off if he'd left *Casablanca* at the end of the second reel, for his sake if not for the audience's. It just depends on how you look at it.

NG: You were one of the pioneers of 16-bit games and graphics — the rotoscoping in *Prince of Persia*, for example. Do you feel the need to keep that cutting edge?

Jordan: It's funny, you know, when we made that decision with *Prince of Persia*, I wasn't thinking about being cutting edge — we did it essentially because I'm not that good at drawing or animation, and it was the only way I could think of to get lifelike movement.

We use rotoscoping in *Last Express* also, but in this case, if you think about the scale of what we wanted to do — to not have the side-scrolling view but to actually be in the corridor and look down, or go into the restaurant and if you walk up to a table have them look up at you — with that volume of animation, there just wasn't any other way.

Motion capture is good for displaying movement from a lot of different angles, but you tend to lose the human, expressive element. And if this game works, what will have made it work is the emotional element.

You have to start seeing the characters as real people.

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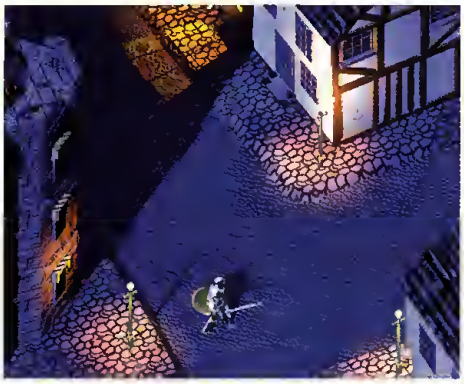
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Forgotten Realms

A monster RPG, with lush graphics that come packed on five CDs, has its origins in — a medical practice?





When you consider there isn't a single tile to be found anywhere in the game's graphics, these highly detailed maps seem even more impressive



While the interface still isn't final, the team is committed to a point-and-click, menu-driven system — one that most RPG fans will find familiar

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Interplay**
Developer:	**Bioware**
Release Date:	**September '97**
Origin:	**Canada**

They're not your everyday bunch of game designers, but Bioware is hard at work on its next title with zeal and no small amount of skill. This may come as a surprise, considering the design house wasn't begun by programmers, artists, or even misguided Hollywood executives, but was instead founded by a trio of licensed doctors with a keen interest in games.

Ray Muzyka, Augustine Yip, and Greg Zeshuck started Bioware in 1995. They worked on in this hobby project in their spare time while practicing medicine; it quickly grew into a full-time job, and the game that eventually became *Shattered Steel* was impressive enough to see a release through Interplay. "It was our first title," explains Muzyka, "and while we were happy with how it turned out, it was rough going for a while."



Licensed docs, left to right: Ray Muzyka, Augustine Yip, and Greg Zeschuk

The relationship with Interplay proved fruitful however, as an RPG already in the works at Bioware was able to benefit from Interplay's AD&D license, enabling it to be set in the *Forgotten Realms* universe. Muzyka says, "Our head programmer has actually read every one of the books — everything, every single one of the short stories and the paperbacks. He made a point of it. He really wanted to immerse himself. I was impressed."

Muzyka boasts, "We think it's the best looking RPG that's ever been

ng alphas



Forgottee Realms'e 16-bit color graphics ere rarely less thee eye-catching. Siece the goal of the designers ie to meke every erea of the game's immeese world ueique — without relyieg on tile sets or even, when possible, repeat textures — Bioware artists have beee kept uedersteedebly buey

Custom Combat

Ray Muzyka talks about customizing your character: "We're using a very detailed scripting language that covers dialogue, spell casting, and attacks, and we'll have pre-made scripts for an offensive fighter or a defensive fighter. But what we hope to do, if you're the kind of player that wants to, is enable you to go into the script editor so you can change the script for your character, and set it up so if you see a certain kind of enemy attack with a certain weapon, and it's best to respond with a certain kind of spell, you can have that spell ready."

made," and he may well have a case. As a native Windows 95 application using DirectDraw, *Forgotten Realms* uses a full 16-bit color palette, compared to the 256-color, 8-bit graphics which are the norm. And, as Muzyka explains, "It's also non tile-based. All the backgrounds are unique, totally rendered."

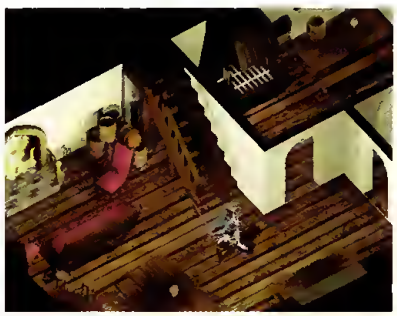
The huge amount of background and character graphics means the game will be shipped on four or five CDs. Even so, *Forgotten Realms* is intended as the first in a series of games, all leading through a quest to uncover the player's true identity and restore peace to a troubled land.

At the start of the game, players create their characters, choosing from among twelve different classes and sub-classes. "One of the things that always annoys people about this sort of game," Guy says, "is that obviously you want the perfect character, so they just keep rerolling stats and waste a half an hour. We're starting with a simulated dice roll, but we're going to give them a pretty good character to start with, and let them pick attributes and skill sets. We want to get people into playing the game."

The game is structured as a series of chapters, designed to guide the player through the overall story, but each chapter is played out in a non-linear fashion, with numerous subquests. Also, goals may be achieved through more than one method, a feature consciously influenced by Bioware's favorite Apple II RPG, *Wasteland*.

The combat engine is a real-time variation on the classic D&D combat system. "We're trying to stick as closely as possible to it because it's a very balanced system," Muzyka explains. "I think one of the problems with D&D computer games that have come before is they haven't quite captured the richness and feel of that system."

Forgotten Realms is designed to end at a natural stopping point, but still quite early in the player's character's career. If the game is a success, sequel packs (think of them as mission discs) are planned to be released every few months until the full story is told. If the game and storyline prove to be as lush as the graphics, each one will be hotly awaited. ng



TSR'e *Forgotten Realms* universe ie huge, and thie siegle game barely scratches its surface. More games ie the series ere pleeeed however





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Christmas Nights

Format: **Saturn**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Sonic Team**
Release Date: **You're holding it!**
Origin: **Japan**

As a Christmas present from Sega of America and Next Generation — a special Christmas edition of Yuji Naka's *Nights*!

As the Saturn's internal clock moves into the winter season, *Nights: Short Version* becomes *Winter Nights*

Sega's recent expansion into PC games and general "entertainment" has led many to speculate as to Saturn's future. But while many Sega fans fear that Saturn may share the 32X's fate, Sega is eager to show that this is not the case, and presents (pun intended) *Christmas Nights* to Next Generation readers as evidence.

Ostensibly a demo for regular *Nights*, *Christmas Nights* contains only Claris's Spring Valley course, and the boss monster Gillwing. The game, which reads the date from the Saturn's internal clock, is a perfectly normal *Nights: Short Version* for the first three quarters of the year. But it's the final three months that Sega hopes will get Saturn fans smiling.

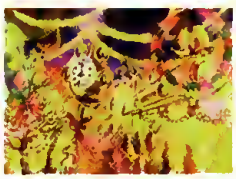
As Saturn's built-in clock moves into the winter season, *Nights: Short Version* transforms into *Winter Nights*. On December 24th, it becomes *Christmas Nights*, turning the special areas into one giant Easter Egg.

Yuji Naka's Sonic Team has created a replacement set of graphics: Spring Valley changes into a landscape covered in snow and gumdrops. Stars become bells, rings are wreaths, and the game's hero sports a Santa suit. The new texture maps and sprites capture the yuletide essence so well, one expects a sled and eight tiny reindeer to fly by.

Once in Christmas mode, the disc becomes less a demo than a coda to the original *Nights*, as it takes place just after the first. The Sonic Team has created new introduction and ending sequences expressly for this version. The soundtrack has also been replaced with a jazzy version of "Jingle Bells" and a stirring a cappella rendition of the *Nights* theme song.

While spending so much effort to create a one-stage bonus level seems astounding, even a waste of effort









At the appropriate time during play, *Nights: Short Version* transforms into a totally new game, with new introduction and end sequences



Christmas presents and a graphical makeover deepen this short demo's replay value

ng alphas





Christmas *Nights*'s graphics engine gets tweaked for some subtle effects (left). The backgrounds change according to Saturn's internal clock. Some Christmas presents let you play different courses (right)

Christmas Nights is only available with the CD editions of Next Generation and _Ultra Gameplayers_

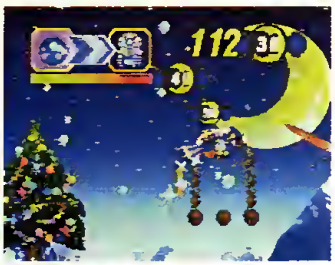
when they should be working on the *Nights* sequel, Yuji Naka and company haven't been twiddling their thumbs. Improvements to the graphics engine help *Christmas Nights* feel like a director's cut, not a rehash. Time-dependent backgrounds, new environmental effects, and animated bumpers hint at the game *Nights* could have been if Sega had delayed the release a few more months. Now, it just hints at what we can expect from the next *Nights* project.

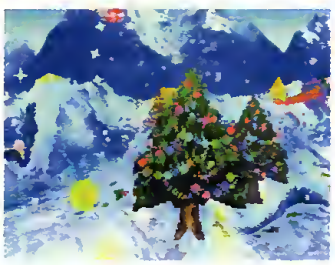
The best part about Christmas, though, is the gifts, and *Christmas Nights* has plenty. In a shrewd move to imbue one stage with high replayability, Sega gives players who finish the demo (and are willing to reset their Saturn clocks) the chance to play a matching game and earn up to five presents. Twenty-four secret features are hidden in the presents, and opening one will allow a player to access high-resolution art galleries, karaoke music, music videos, artificial life monitors, and at least four methods of alternative play. To the Saturn fan, the presents will provide a wealth of *Nights* information, while it is hoped that newcomers will want to check out the full game.

Sega has no plans to sell *Christmas Nights* in the U.S. (it can't afford to have full-price *Nights* sales undercut by a demo). Therefore (ahem), it's only available with the CD editions of Next Generation and *Ultra Gameplayers* — and we all hope it keeps you warm through the winter.

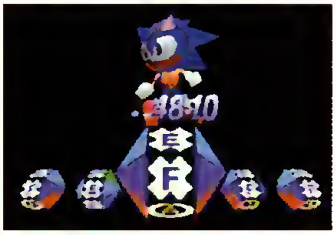
Our best wishes. Enjoy.

ng

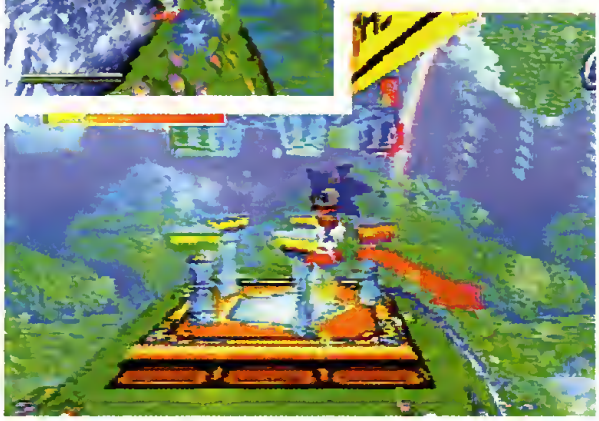




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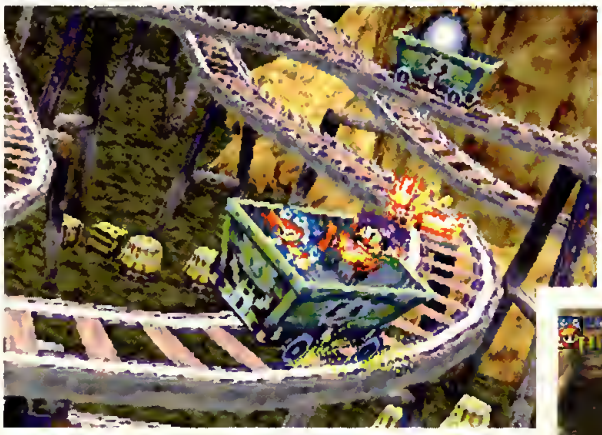
NanoTek Warrior™

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Grandia

When our obsession with shooters and racers ends, RPGs will reclaim lost ground. *Grandia* may be the catalyst for change

Format: **Saturn**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **GameArts**
Release Date: **Spring '97**
Origin: **Japan**







Tha backgrounds in thia aaw 3D RPG ara multi-layered intricata affairs overflowing with color and detail. Tha gama'a ten main cities ara apparently hives of activity, each oaa with its own cultural identity

The arrival of 32-bit technology inevitably changed the RPG forever. The simple overhead views and cute little characters that graced dozens of Super NES classics are facing extinction. The lure of 3D is hard for developers to resist.

Grandia is an example of a new breed of RPG adventures. Although the characters are bitmaps, the locations are all built from lusciously textured polygons and, it has to be said, look absolutely beautiful as a result. Best of all, they retain the cutesy, *Zelda*-style look that always graces Japanese RPGs.

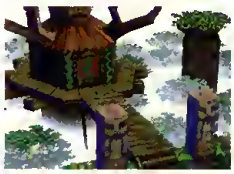
The story, set in a mythical world in the midst of industrial revolution, is the usual RPG foolishness. The player controls Justin, a 14 year-old boy who must travel to the continent of Elencia to solve the mystery of the ancient Anjel civilization.

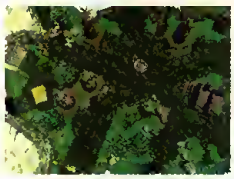
Although the adventure includes global travel by land and sea, there are actually only ten cities in the game — apparently, the designers wanted to pack in as much intimate detail as they could. Consequently, each city has a distinct culture and atmosphere and its native inhabitants share common physical traits.

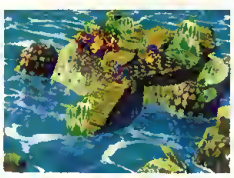
As with most RPG games, *Grandia* offers combat, although here quick reflexes and sharp decision making are more important than a character's strength. Before a fight, the player learns about the enemy so that it's possible to bow out of no-win fistfights before a punch is thrown.

It seems the designers of *Grandia* added gameplay depth and great visuals to the RPG. The complex cities and the industrial revolution slant (providing a backdrop of colonial emigration) give a more interesting setting than the usual middle-earth nonsense. *Dark Savior* could prove that there is a place for RPGs in Sega's 32-bit world. Hopefully *Grandia* will, too.

***Dark Savior* could prove that there is a place for RPGs in Sega's 32-bit world. Hopefully *Grandia* will too**







Thia tree-top villaga settiag perfactly axhibits tha gama'a beautiful 3D scaaary

[DIAGNOSIS › MIND BLOCK]



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› Obsession with color patterns and falling gems

› Victory induced Euphoria

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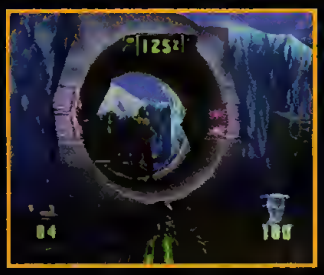
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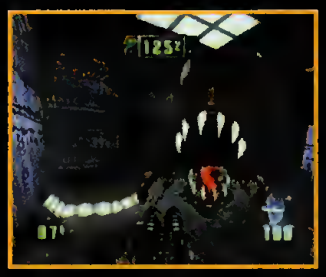




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JALECO

Carmaggedon

Blood, cars, violence, more cars, some more blood — and some extra violence. What fun!



Format:	**PlayStation, PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**SCI**
Developer:	**Stainless Software**
Release Date:	**March '97**
Origin:	**U.K.**

"We didn't use Direct3D because it's too slow and restrictive"

Patrick Suckland, Head Programmer





Wida open spaces aad raal world physics taka skillful programmiag — all la the servica of smashiag stuff





A reel eesty monster car with faags — just tha thing for a Suaday driva

The promo reads, "Never before has the act of hit-and-run been so conscientiously simulated on computer." It just goes downhill from there.

Founded in August 1994 by head programmer Patrick Buckland and design director Neil Barnden, Stainless Software resides within "The Cottage," a suspiciously normal-looking building on the Isle of Wight, just off the southern coast of England. Buckland is perhaps best known for the Macintosh classic *Crystal Quest* — a far cry from his current project.

"When people play driving games, they always want to go the wrong way; they want to smash cars up," Buckland says. "So the original idea was a destruction derby game, but unfortunately Psygnosis got there first! So the inclusion of pedestrians getting splattered was put in to set it apart from *Destruction Derby* and add an element of controversy, because controversy never hurts."

In what has to be a conscious take on *Death Race 2000* (which, incidentally, had a directly licensed arcade game in the late '70s), players of *Carmaggedon* earn money by running people over, and by smashing into opponents' cars. While running down pedestrians has been seen recently in *Quarantine* and *Die Hard Trilogy*, among others, there's a certain absurd glee at work here: more cash can be earned by "creative deaths" — making bodies fly especially far through the air, causing heads to pop off, and so on. Also, once internal organs land somewhere, they stay there and can be run over again.

However, all the gore is slightly misleading, as just beneath the blood-red surface lies one of the more sophisticated and flexible game engines of the season. "I





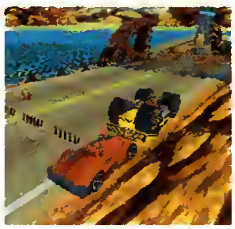


It aia't subtia and it aia't eiweye pretty, but it doee have its moments

ng alphas







Tha aavironmants show a lot of craativity — aota tha football stadiam, completa with aalformed players (top right)

"Creative deaths" — making bodies fly especially far, causing heads to pop off, and so on — earns you extra cash

know people are going to think that all the people getting run over is what makes this game stand out," Buckland says, "but what really makes it stand out is we have a generalized environment. We have tracks, but more important is that it's just a wide-open space and we throw cars at it and say, 'Right, off you go!' You have to be ready to handle anything."

The game runs using the BRender 3D API, developed by Argonaut, makers of the FX 3D chip for the Super NES. This a natural for Stainless, since one of its previous contracts was to port BRender to Macintosh and build BRender support tools and demos. "We didn't use Direct3D — it's too slow and too restrictive," Buckland quips.

The game's engine not only enables large, completely 3D environments, but painstakingly calculated real-world physics. Cars corner, flip out, spin, roll, reacting very much the way a real car would under such extreme circumstances. Damage results not in the replacement of the normal car for a stock, damaged model as in *Daytona*, but with calculated deformations to the same model. No two crashes result in the same damage, and more severe impacts result in worse deformations — pretty much like the real world.



The PlayStation conversion has been subcontracted to U.S. developer Elite, so GT Interactive can release both versions simultaneously. "They're basically throwing a lot of money at them and saying, 'Go get this done!'" Buckland jokes. "They're going to have a tough time though, because it's a game that's stretching the limits of the PC anyway in terms of the richness of the environment. In most driving games, you're in a sort of long thin channel, and if you hit the edges you bounce back in. So we've tried to create a free, totally explorable environment to drop the player in, so we just say, 'Off you go!' — but that takes a bit of work." Yes it does. ng



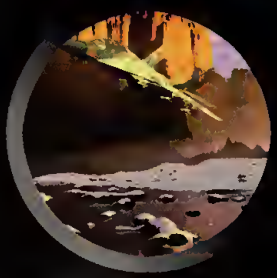


"There's three waya to wia a race," Backland explains. "You can come in first, if you care about the race, which we consider the wimp option. Or, you caa completaly smash all your opponents. Finally, you caa also wia by killing avery pedestriaa — although chasiag tham all dowa might taka a faw hours"

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Shining the Holy Ark

Sega's popular *Shining* series of 16-bit RPGs made its 32-bit debut last year with *Shining Wisdom*. Now the designers have a stunning 3D addition to their action/adventure portfolio







***Shining* includes a wealth of detailed polygon monsters, which pounce on the player from rooftops and lurk in dank dungeon corridors**

Holy Ark's core game concept was stored in Sega Japan's vaults until hardware could cope with its large demands

Format: **Saturn**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Sega**
Release Date: **TBA**
Origin: **Japan**

Although related to the popular Genesis RPG series *Shining Force* (which includes the top-view, *Zelda*-inspired, *Shining Wisdom*), *Shining the Holy Ark* has a different story and has totally updated its visual style from its aging (but still loved) RPG predecessors.

In fact, this 3D RPG was originally planned as a follow-up to *Shining in the Darkness*, but the project was too ambitious for 16-bit, so the concept was stored in Sega's vaults for a couple of years until hardware could cope with its large demands.

Despite some initial problems with perspective correction, eye-opening solutions have been found. Overall, it seems a worthy update, and the designers promise a more adult game than the other *Shining* titles — a welcome shift in focus. ng



The smooth, realistic scenery was created using a technique to mask angular polygons. Although 3D, the gameplay is classic RPG

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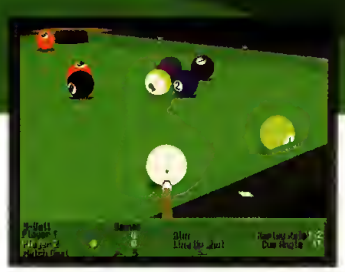


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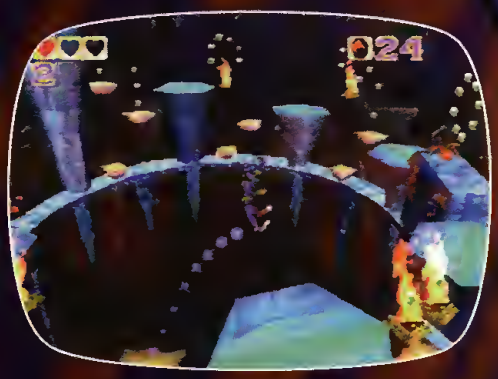
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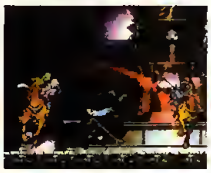
PlayStation™

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Castlevania

Can Konami's creepy 2D classic still hold its own in a game world increasingly dominated by guns, cars, and bandicoots?





Excellent lighting effects (top) and whip-based combat (above) are sure to excite

Konami's *Castlevania* series of platform games (known as *Dracula* in Japan) have continued to hold a place in the hearts of die-hard platform fans since the early 1980s. But it's taken Konami a long time to get around to adding a 32-bit installment to its haunting and somber series.

Originally a series that achieved widespread popularity on the 8-bit NES and then later on the Game Boy and Super NES (it appeared on the Super Famicom way back in late 1991 and is still one of the seminal platformers for that system), *Castlevania* for PlayStation bears more than a passing resemblance to the solid 1993 PC Engine version. Which is no bad thing.

No details are available at present, although it's known that Konami plans a more open-plan adventure this time with multiple routes and more stages.

ng

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Konami Japan**
Developer:	**Konami Japan**
Release Date:	**Fall 1997**
Origin:	**Japan**



Castlevenie rarely looked good in static shots but it plays well

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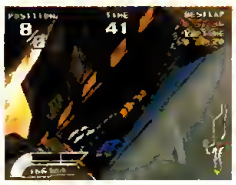
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A futuristic racing simulation might seem ideal for conversion from arcade to console, but in the post-*Wipeout* era players crave more than just mindblowing speed

Speed King





Stylistically, *Speed King* has a lot going for it, but the gameplay needs a serious overhaul

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Konami**
Developer: **Konami**
Release Date: **TBA**
Origin: **Japan**

Development of the arcade version of *Speed King* was a drawn-out process. By the time it hit arcades, it didn't impress — especially with an enclosed reactive cabinet costing $100,000. Konami hopes the home version will be more successful.

Now however, its similarity to *Wipeout* (and that game's arguably superior playability) must be cause for concern, so it's heartening to learn that Konami is planning to augment *Speed King*'s simplistic gameplay with features more suited to repeated play on a console. These include a "time attack" and a "ghost" mode, in which players race against a phantom ship. Whether PlayStation needs another futuristic racing game is debatable. But in Japan, where Konami enjoys a high profile, gamers may choose this over *Wipeout XL*.



Set in the fictional Japanese city of Neo-Kobe, *Speed King* should fly on PlayStation





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PATIENT 33-S: Received multiple treatments for injuries sustained while participating in "Rocket War." Reconstructive surgery corrected most facial bones destroyed by repeated encounters with rockets, cement walls and pylons. Skin grafts from buttocks region replaced epidermal tissue burned off by jet exhaust.



PATIENT 4-0: Treated for severe lacerations received when he was knocked off his rocket by competitor's cable while "Rocket Racing." Rhinoplasty and ear reconstruction were also necessary, as patient's face was smashed repeatedly against the ground and walls while traveling in excess of 100 mph.



PATIENT 98-B: Treated for massive head trauma suffered after ramming his rocket into an exploding ball while playing "Rocket Ball." The accident completely welded his eye sockets shut and tore 90% of the skin off his face. Needless to say, this was no ordinary "lift and tuck."

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   d) Just the intruders who piss you off (like Yurias).
   e) Most of the above.

2. How are you going to trap and kill the intruders?
   a) Spike them from the wall.
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   c) Zap them with the Volt Cage.
   d) Use Mind Kill.
   e) Most of the above.

3. What are you seeking?
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   b) Vengeance.
   c) Redemption.
   d) Acquittal.
   e) All of the above.

3. Are you really...
   a) A good guy.
   b) A bad guy.
   c) A victim of circumstance.
   d) A wimp.
   e) All of the above.









For the answers see the Temco Super Bowl ad in this same magazine.

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League of Pain

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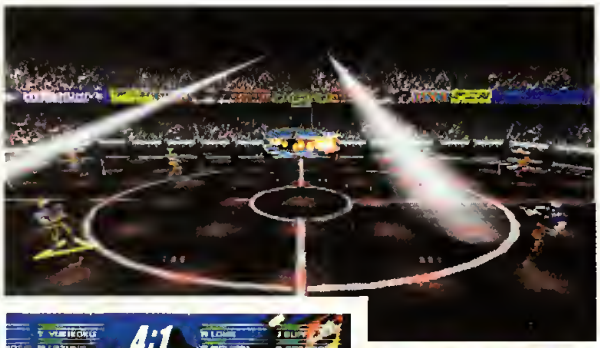
Format: **PlayStation, PC**
Publisher: **Psygnosis**
Developer: **Beyond Reality**
Release Date: **March '97**
Origin: **U.K.**

***League of Pain* mixes the brutality of rugby, the passing of soccer, and the shooting of basketball**

Strange iterations of sports games appeared in the mid-'80s when *Cyberball* graced arcades and again in the the early '90s when Electronic Arts released its 16-bit *Mutant League* series (*Hockey* and *Football*). However, with the arrival of 32-bit systems and the power to build absorbing 3D arenas, utilize polygonal characters, or incorporate true physics, it was only a matter of time until wild new games with roots in traditional sims would appear. Now, *League of Pain* joins *Blast Chamber* and *Hyperblade* to bring home another new sport with over-the-top violence and arcade-style power-ups.

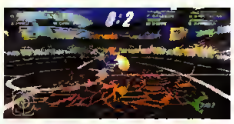


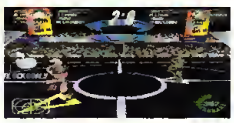
For all the lunacy of the rules, *League of Pain* plays like a typical sports game, with familiar controls and multiple camera angles





Each team member has four attributes: speed, power, stamina and accuracy. The player can adjust each accordingly





The flying saucer hanging over the court is actually the goal (above). The glowing ball offsets the dark arenas

Called *Riot* in the U.K., *League of Pain* pits two teams of six against each other in a 3D arena and combines the brutality of rugby, the passing of soccer, and the shooting of basketball. The team in possession rushes the ball to the opposing end zone while dodging slide-tackles, elbows, and vicious attempts to steal the ball, block shots, and intercept passes. Reaching the end zone, however, is only half the battle: this merely "charges up" the ball, at which point the team is granted the privilege of working for a shot at the actual goal, located above center court.

Conventional wisdom says that an action game which plays like a sports game may not appeal to either sim enthusiasts or arcade players (although action games disguised as sports games, such as *NBA Jam*, appeal to both). But this kind of genre cross-breeding inevitably leads to innovation of one sort or another, and with *League of Pain*, Beyond Reality is limited only by its own imagination and the tenacity and skill of its programmers. ng







Players can select from any of 16 world teams, with names such as the Moscow Meulers

this may hurt a little.







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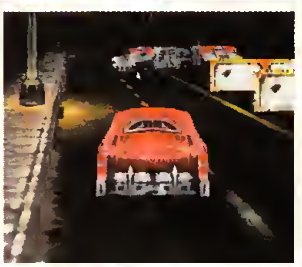
Propaganda



Virgin takes driving-combat into the future, by bringing it back to the past









No that car isn't flying (top), but *Propaganda*'s completely polygonal world enables the player to pull off some extremely daring stunts

The bright explosions are about all that light up the grim city environments

Format:	**PlayStation, PC**
Publisher:	**Virgin Interactive**
Developer:	**Burst**
Release Date:	**1997**
Origin:	**U.S.**

Welcome back to the genre of urban driving combat games (*Quarantine*, *Twisted Metal*) where the world outside your car is bleak, lawless, and riddled with corruption. But you, of course, can change all this — if armed with your supercharged deathmobile. Two years in the making, Virgin's *Propaganda* looks to merge this familiar hi-octane automobile action with a story.

Differing from the typical futuristic environments of many games, the setting for *Propaganda* goes down a different road. Similar to what Activision is attempting with *Interstate '76*, Burst (Virgin's internal development team formerly known as, um, Virgin) introduces the player to an alternate history; in this case, it's a hypothetical fascist state of the 1950s.

"We've built this world based on the propaganda machines of Eastern Europe during the 1940s," says Kelly Turner, Executive Producer, describing the four Goth-style cities that make up the grim setting for the game's forty missions. "It's not futuristic at all, it's more retro."

According to Turner, in the world of *Propaganda* WWI has just ended, but it's now 1950. Players take on the role of a war hero wrongfully set-up by the leader of an elitist faction called the

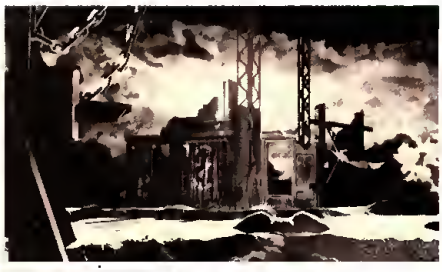
"We've built this world based on the propaganda machines of Eastern Europe during the 1940s"

Kelly Turner, Executive Producer

"For every two pages of script dialogue, we wanted a death or an explosion"

Kelly Turner, Executive Producer





The viewpoint is always from behind the car. While fine for a racing game, Burst felt that a first-person or windshield perspective was too limiting for *Propaganda*'s combat action, as players must face multiple enemies simultaneously

Black Hand. Having narrowly escaped death, you must dismantle the corrupt government you once fought to protect.

"It's a mission-based driving game, but with the emphasis on heavy-duty, car-to-car, fast-paced, high-impact action," says Turner. *Propaganda*'s cars and environment are polygon-based and rendered on-the-fly, which enables a full reign of freedom within the 3D cities.

Anyone who's played *Destruction Derby* appreciates the solid "feel" of game mechanics based on real-world physics. Turner agrees, and is aiming for a similar quality in *Propaganda*.

"The emphasis here is stunt-driving," he notes. "The player can jump off ramps or go up on two wheels, which will be key to the gameplay. Some cities feature multi-level roads, so you may be able to find a ramp and jump up to a secret section of elevated street."

The four cities average between 15 and 20 blocks squared. Turner notes that the designers have segmented parts of each city into distinguishable neighborhoods — with landmarks, so players won't get lost. And like many modern cities, Turner says, "You need to learn what neighborhoods to avoid."

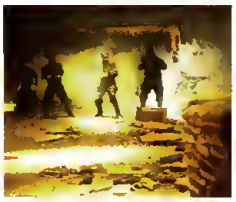
On the surface, the gameplay sounds very similar to previous driving combat games, but, according to Neil Young, Burst's Vice President of Product Development, the game will be much more than the usual fare. "I wouldn't mention *Propaganda* in the same breath as *Quarantine* or *Twisted Metal*," he decrees. "They're very different games."

"With *Propaganda*, we wanted to give people an interactive action movie," Young continues. "It's interactive in that it's a good game that leverages cutting-edge technology and 30th of a second response time. It feels like a game and gives players an adrenaline rush. It's a movie in that there's a strong linear narrative that compels players to complete the mission," he believes.

Ultimately, Burst is looking to seamlessly intertwine a story with the gameplay. Instead of a variety of cars to choose from at the beginning, new cars (about eight in total — at this stage the development team is contemplating the introduction of secret cars) will be introduced throughout the game. According to Turner, specific missions will let the player upgrade to another vehicle. "One mission will be to steal this prototype car," he reveals.

While FMV cut-scenes do exist within *Propaganda*, don't expect to bogged down in them. Turner demanded only short, exciting FMV sequences. "We kidded," he laughs, "that in every two pages of script dialogue we wanted a death or an explosion." To this end, Burst set up shop for a total of ten days at a Burbank studio, building a nine-stage set to shoot different interiors, all just for the game's 25 minutes of footage.

Burst is also proud of the technological breakthroughs *Propaganda* showcases. "One of the things we've developed is a seamless loading system" Young brags. "In the PlayStation version, for example, you'll









For 25 minutes of FMV, Burst shot at a studio for 10 days on nine stages

"The emphasis here is stunt-driving, the player can jump off of ramps, and go up on two wheels"

Kelly Turner, Executive Producer





Eight cars are up for up for grabs — you get e new one for completing e mission successfully



The stylized vehicles were designed from the beginning to capture the look of populer 50e muscle cars with e hi-tech and gothic twist

never see the word 'Loading' over a black screen."

The PC version is Virgin's first MMX title (so make sure you have the hardware to handle it), and will also take advantage of 3D accelerator cards, including those by 3Dfx, Rendition, and S3 Virge. A Saturn version was abandoned in October, for two reasons, as Young explains:

"We found that we expended so much energy just trying to get the Saturn version up to the PlayStation and PC level that it was starting to detract from making the best PlayStation or PC game we could." Young says carefully. "Which leads to my second point. Commercially, it is a very tough market for Saturn. So if a poor performer is detracting your attention away from your real core business, it really doesn't make sense to continue on that path."

While coming together smoothly, *Propaganda* still has a few missing elements. If you look at the screen shots, you'll notice the streets are devoid of spectators. "Right now we're looking into implementing sprite-based humans," Turner says, "It's just a creative call at this point. The core of the gameplay is the car-to-car battles. Running down pedestrians would be a side thing."

Vehicular combat games are racing out of the horizon (see *Carmageddon* on page 125) almost as fast as first-person shooters. Hopefully, all will attempt to be as unique as what Burst plans for *Propaganda*.



The three-color posters of the period ere littered throughout the game's background end really capture the grim essence of *Propaganda*'s world

Multiplayer, Video, and PC Game Evolution

ONLINE & INTERNET GAMES REPORT

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JANUARY EVENTS

M 6 — 6:00PM

IGN OPEN DAY
Chat live with all five editors of *Imagine Game Network's* videogame websites. All your videogame questions will be answered.

T 7 — 1:00PM

THE BIG QUESTION
Ultra Game Players Online hosts a special poll. Which game impressed you most over the holidays?

W 8 — 6:00PM

EXCLUSIVE MOVIE PREMIER
View the first QuickTime movies of Nintendo's next big game exclusively on *N64.com*.

T 9 — 1:00PM

MOVERS AND SHAKERS
In this downloadable audio file *SaturnWorld* interviews a senior Sega executive.

F 10 — 6:00PM

PALACE CHAT
The editors of *Next Generation Online* discuss the long and short term chances for M2 in IGN's first live debate.

13 — 3:00PM

MOVERS AND SHAKERS
Talk live with Activision: developers of Zork Nemesis and Mechwarrior II on the Palace in this two hour Q&A forum hosted by *PSX Power*.

14 — 6:00PM

TEN DEMO DAY
Next Generation Online launches ten brand new playable demos to help while away those cold January nights.

15 — 1:00PM

ONLINE INTERVIEW
N64.com's editor Doug Perry interviews a top Midway designer in a streaming audio feed. Abridged version also available in text.

16 — 6:00PM

BEST PLAYSTATION GAME EVER
Vote for the best PlayStation game yet created in a special *PSX Power* poll.

17 — 6:00PM

DAVE PERRY INTERVIEW
Ultra Game Players Online interviews Shiny's Dave Perry in a downloadable audio file and text script. QuickTimes of Shiny's new game also exclusively available on the main site.

NEXT GENERATION ONLINE
http//www.next-generation.com

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Every day, one of the five sites in the Imagine Games Network hosts a special event. These include interviews, chat forums, downloads and extra features. And they're all absolutely free.

All you have to do is check the times and the dates of the events, and make sure you're there to enjoy them. You'll find the urls of all the sites at the bottom of this page.

http//:www.imaginegames.com

20 6:00PM

SATURN VIEW
Download up to 25 first view QuickTimes of Saturn games due to be released in the months ahead courtesy of ***Saturn World***.

21 6:00PM

ONLINE GAMING DEBATE
Next Generation Online hosts a special Palace debate with the heads of TEN and Dwango.

22 6:00PM

MAMMOTH COMPETITION
Enter ***Imagine Game Network's*** huge competition. Over $10,000 worth of videogame hardware, software and peripherals are up for grabs.

23 6:00PM

HOW DO YOU FEEL?
In a detailed ***N64.com*** poll, vote on your experiences of the Nintendo 64 so far. Is it better or worse than you expected? How about the software? Are you excited about the future?

24 6:00PM

THE SATURN POLL
Which genre would you like to see more of on the Saturn. The results will be forwarded to Sega by ***Saturn World***. You can make the difference.

27 6:00PM

ON THE PALACE
Three industry game gurus answer your N64 queries in a special Palace chat forum hosted by ***Ultra Game Players Online***.

28 1:00PM

ONLINE INTERVIEW
Capcom's US boss Greg Ballard talks to ***PSX Power*** in a streaming audio feed. Abridged interview also available as text.

29 6:00PM

TEN EXCLUSIVE QUICKTIMES
Next Generation Online previews the ten most promising games of the months ahead in a QuickTime extravaganza.

30 6:00PM

A DAY AT NINTENDO
N64.com spends a day at Nintendo's Seattle offices and brings you a comprehensive report including text, visuals, QuickTimes and audio files.

31 6:00PM

PALACE CHAT
All five editors of the ***Imagine Game Network*** will be live on the Palace to discuss all your queries and points of view.

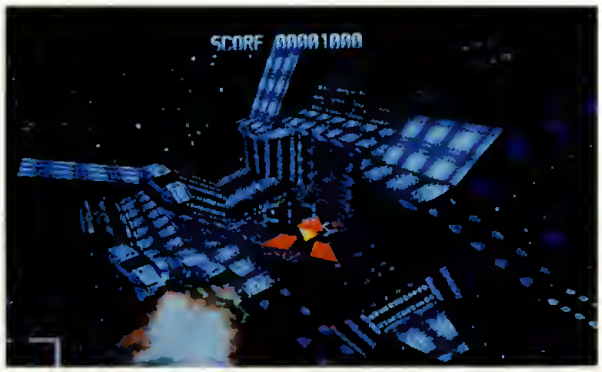
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Solar Assault

Looking to save the *Gradius* arcade series from going the way of so many other 2D shooters, Konami enters the 3D world



The fighters are modeled after the original 2D Vic Viper and Lord British ships from previous *Gradius* games — brings a tear to the eye, doesn't it?



Weird sci-fi environments, such as this tunnel, lend to the bizarro exploration quality that is always a subtle part of scrolling shooters

Format:	**Arcade**
Publisher:	**Konami Japan**
Developer:	**Konami Japan**
Release Date:	**TBA**
Origin:	**Japan**

Traditional *Gradius* power-ups blend the feel of the old game with new 3D graphics and gameplay

If Elvis were a side-scrolling, two-dimensional shooter, he would be doubly dead in 1997. But unlike "the King," Konami's *Gradius* series may survive after reinventing itself. Not with sequin suits mind you, but with true 3D polygonal graphics, and a new name.

Forget the traditional *Gradius* perspective, *Solar Assault* gives players a chase-view perspective of their fighter. Unlike in *Starblade*, the environment is true 3D, and the player is in no way limited to one path of movement. But like traditional 2D shooters, players will have to dodge oncoming enemy ships and gunfire. Also, the traditional *Gradius* power-ups are all here, including speed-up, missile, and double-fire, enabling the player to increase firepower and maneuverability throughout the game. This, plus a similar display system, illustrates an attempt to blend the feel of the old game with new graphics and gameplay.

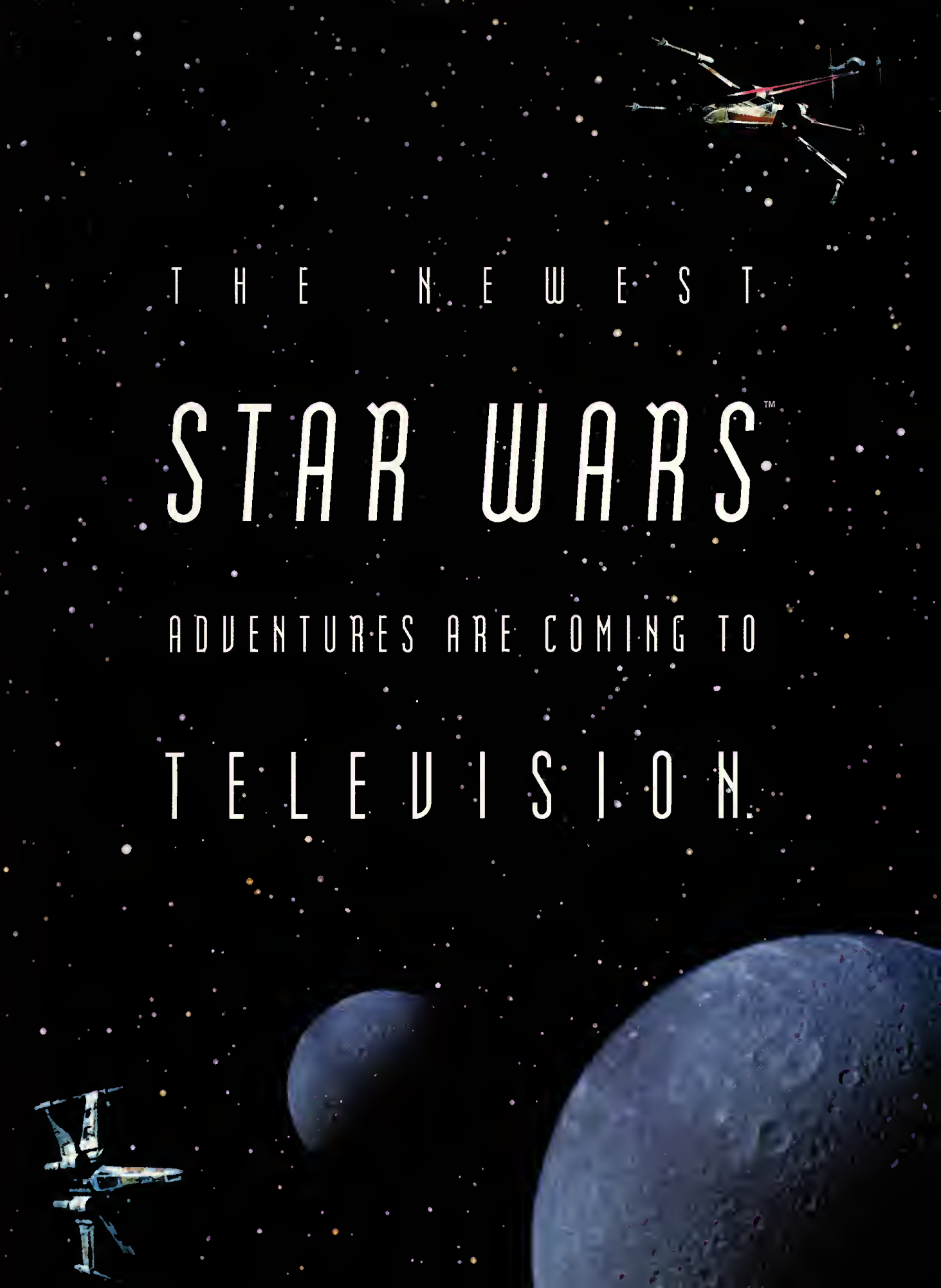
The game is designed to run in a regular arcade cabinet, but it will also work in the cabinet Konami had specially designed for *Speed King*.

Early reports from Japan suggest that some of *Solar Assault*'s gameplay may have been sacrificed at the altar of 3D. But what choice does Konami have? Releasing another cookie-cutter shooter in the mold of the side-scrolling ancients just isn't an option anymore. Let's hope that Konami manages to bring the best of the old and the new, and creates a new breed of shooter for 1997. ng





While true 3D, flying through tunnels restricts the player's movement. So the action is tight, just like in the shooter days of old


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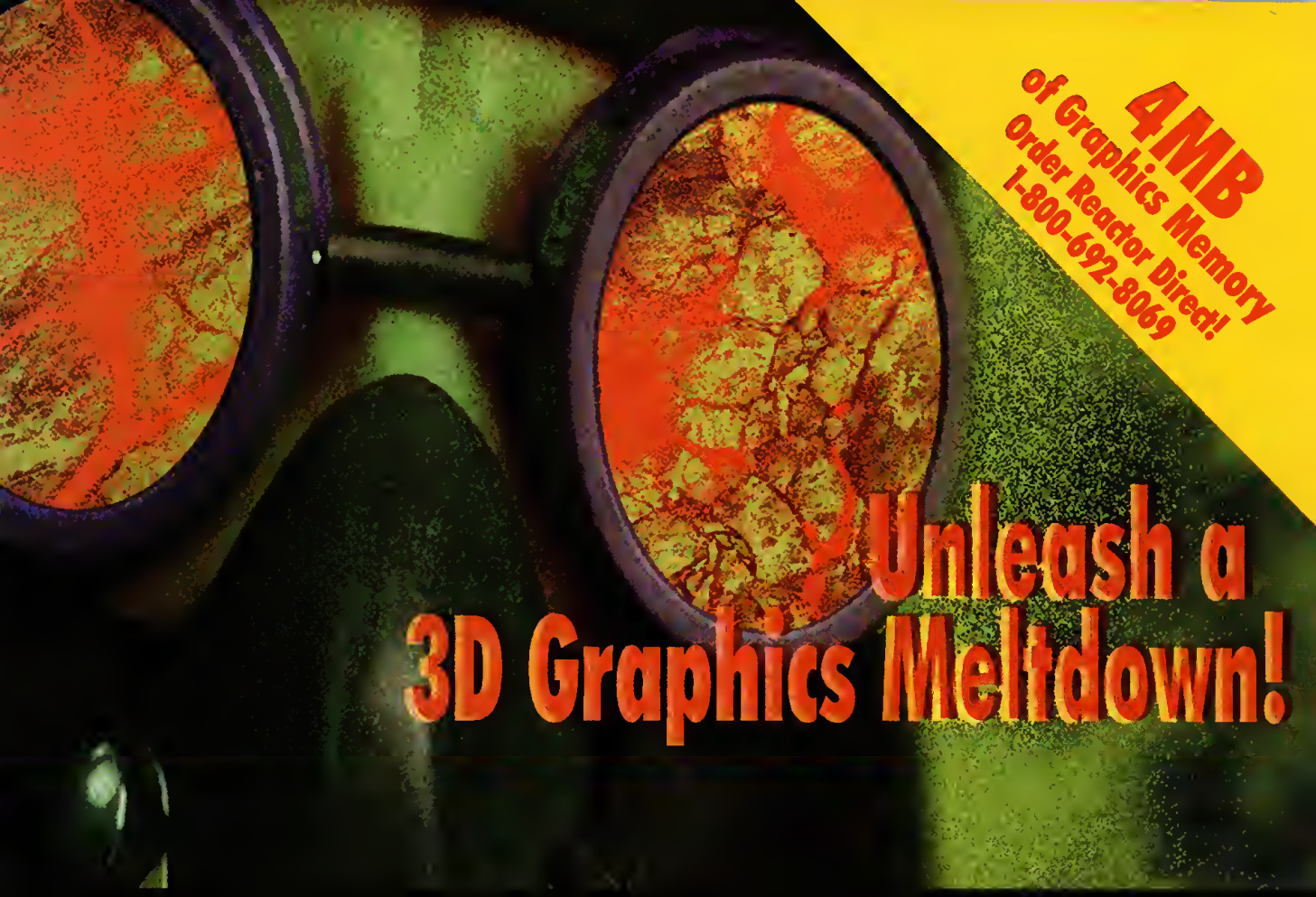
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INTERGRAPH

Super Mario Kart 64

Mario returns — on wheels. Shigeru Miyamoto's third N64 title is a high-octane sequel to one of the most played games in history. A Next Generation exclusive



The original *Super Mario Kart* was a triumph of gameplay over graphics (despite offering some of the best 16-bit visuals around). The 64-bit sequel looks set to continue its predecessors worthy traditions, with plenty of arcade thrills

Format:	**Nintendo 64**
Publisher:	**Nintendo**
Developer:	**Nintendo**
Release Date:	**March '97**
Origin:	**Japan**

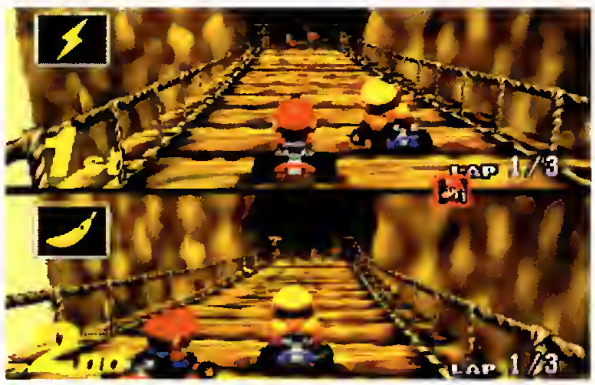
The prospect of being stranded on a desert island with no food or water might not be so harrowing if you could take a Miyamoto game with you. Any example might suffice, but many gamers would be happiest with their predicament were the example *Super Mario Kart* on Nintendo's creaking 16-bit Super NES.

The sugar-coated racing game captured the imaginations of over 3.5 million people worldwide and further cemented designer Shigeru Miyamoto's enviable reputation as the Mozart of console gaming.

The imminent release of *Super Mario Kart 64* will be music to the ears of every one of those familiar with the 16-bit original. Nintendo has wisely chosen to release the 64-bit follow-up as soon after the release of *Super Mario 64* and *PilotWings 64* as possible, emphasizing the superior quality of its Super NES back catalogue, which is to the N64 what Sega's arcade division has been to the tenacious Saturn.



You don't have to play a good guy, but watch out for Mario — he has a violent history with turtles



Mario versus Wario — who's gonna make it across the bridge first? The two-player version works the same as the Super NES's split-screen mode

ng alphas





Before racing on each course (above) players can practice (right). Check out the cows in the field — do you get the feeling that somehow they can be made to join in the action?



What made the original *Super Mario Kart* such a fine game was its balance of play, its fascinating and varied track designs, and the "different but equal" characteristics of its drivers — all of which added up to one of the most compulsive head-to-head gaming environments ever.

The recent *Mario* and *PilotWings* updates have both featured significant redesign and innovation, particularly in *Mario*'s case, but *Super Mario Kart 64* is set to be the most instantly recognizable of the three. Notable modifications amount to new drivers and power-ups, all-new contoured courses, and a very welcome four-way split-screen mode.

The full character line-up comprises Mario, Luigi, Peach, Kinopio (previously "Toad" in the west), Yoshi, Donkey Kong, Wario, and Koopa (aka "Bowser"). It's not entirely surprising that such a minor character as Nokonoko (aka "Koopa") has been dropped in favor of the more heavyweight Wario; the cast now







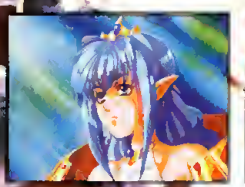
Veteren *Merio* players will recognize these guys. As per usuel, quick steering and a honed sense of timing will get you through unscathed

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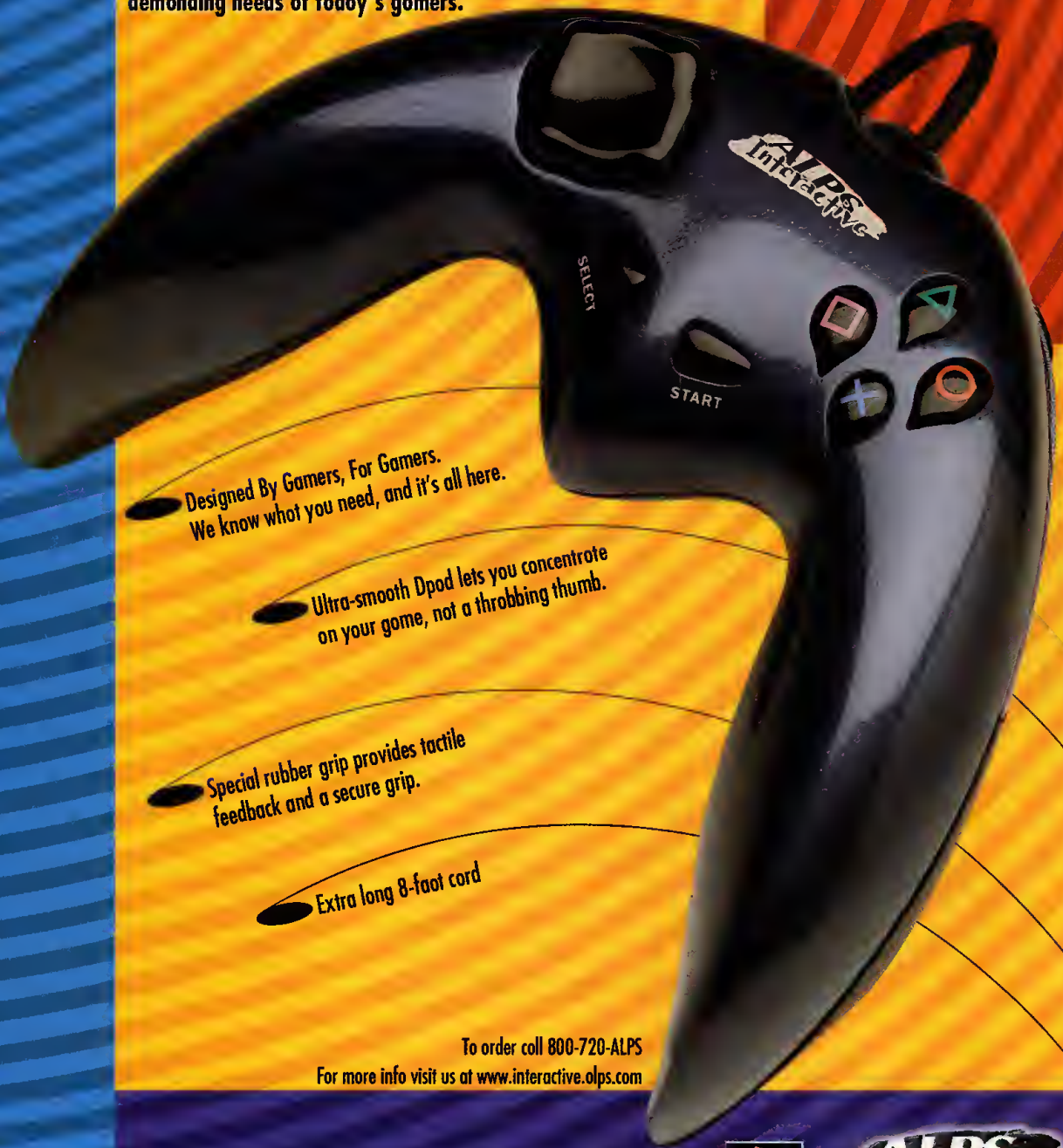
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PlayStation

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Tha four-playar moda (top left) is whara *Super Mario Kart 64* truly comes into its own. Ba sura to pick up whatavar bonusaa you find in your path (abova). Waheeeeeeey! (abova right)







Three viaws of the same race at the same time, from three different playars

features five characters that have all starred in their own games (*Super Mario Bros.*, *Yoshi's Island*, *Wario's Woods*, and *Donkey Kong Country*).

Super Mario Kart 64 will feature 20 courses in total — 16 for Grand Prix mode and four for Battle — with the Grand Prix divided into the Kinoko (Mushroom) Cup, Flower Cup, Star Cup, and Special Cup, with a scheduled four courses assigned to each. All now undulate to provide plenty of jumps, and feature short cuts to exploit, as well as other incidental vehicles to avoid, such as speeding buses and trains — it's your usual drive in the country *Super Mario Kart 64* style.

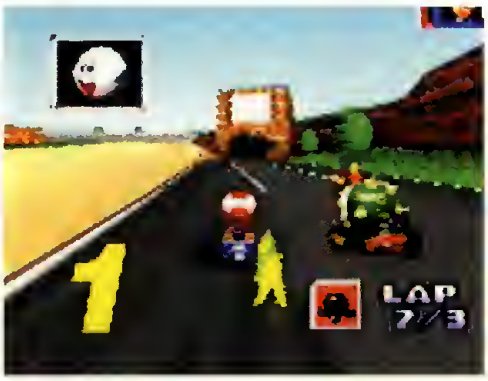
Bananas and turtle shells will still feature heavily as offensive devices during races, as will new power-ups that enable multiple attacks (carpet-bombing the track with bananas, for example) and a "reversal" item that enables the player to switch the order of the pack, moving from last to first place.

Night stages should provide some interesting challenges, as players negotiate the courses in semi-darkness, using only their headlights to



Snatching a look at other players as they negotiate an obstacle ahead of you is always a useful (if morally unsound) tactic in four-player mode

ng alphas



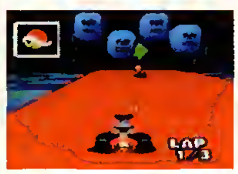












See what happens (top) if you don't keep e careful eye on the skies?

New players, new courses, and new weapons. *Super Mario Kart 64* has taken the best of the old and combined it with the best of the new for an unprecedented gaming experience. At the tail and of the pack, only five seconds into the race (above)

guide them. Fog will also feature extensively in some of the less immediately visually stimulating levels (such as the Canyon stage), requiring a thorough knowledge of the track.

Perhaps the single most obvious innovation can be seen in the new four-player split-screen mode. For two-player matches, the screen splits horizontally in two, and three plus one blank view for three players. Detail levels appear to suffer slightly in this mode, however, and pop-up is likely to rear its less than attractive head.

Nintendo has paid particular attention to ensuring that the game's graphics remain faithful in spirit to the original. Though the levels themselves are obviously made up of textured polygons (with many rather simplistic trackside details), the characters themselves are prerendered sprites, produced *Donkey Kong Country*-style, and presumably introduced to maintain a high frame rate.

Despite the obvious screen-resolution advantages, Nintendo's game doesn't look as visually extravagant as *Motor Toon GP2* on PlayStation (and Sony's effort uses realtime polygons in generating its

The single most obvious innovation is the new four-player split-screen mode

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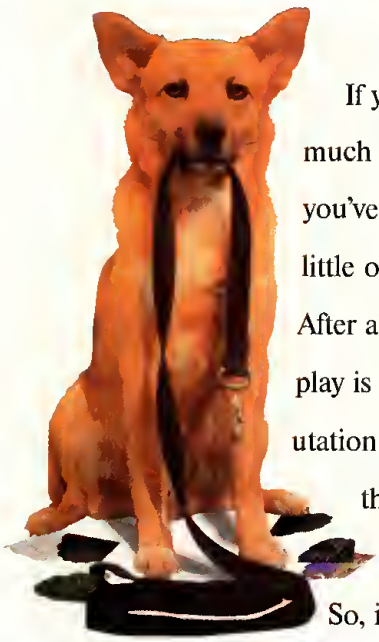
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Some courses feature fog, some feature snow, some feature water. All feature hillie eed bumps for the most freeatic reciag ectioe possible

original's multiplayer option, this could be the title to move the goalposts of the racing game genre, in the same way its predecessor did.

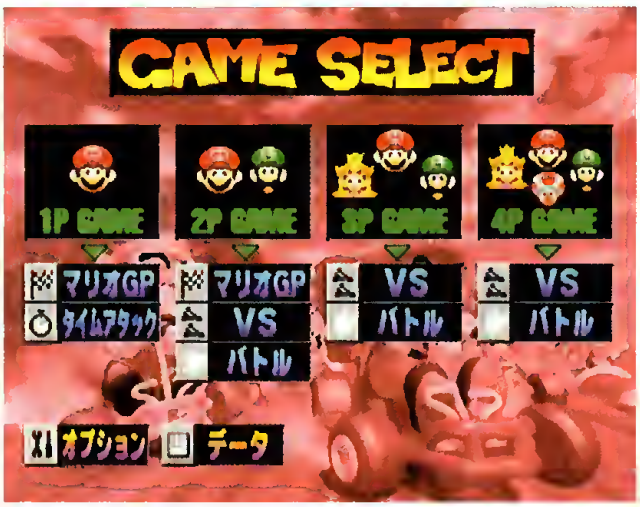
Super Mario Kart 64 is certain to be one of the biggest selling games in Japan this Christmas, perhaps being overshadowed only by the imminent RPG *Final Fantasy VII*, from recent PlayStation devotee Square Soft (rumored to be returning to the Nintendo camp soon).

One thing is certain: Nintendo 64 joypads will sell more than any other gaming accessory next year, and Mario looks set to remain the world's most popular videogame character for the foreseeable future. The only downside is that it's yet another Nintendo-produced title. When are we going to see a high-quality N64 game from someone else?

One thing is certain: Nintendo 64 joypads will sell more than any other gaming accessory next year

vehicles). But it's not visual content that will sell *SMK64*, of course, it's gameplay. And, if the 64-bit incarnation is able to recreate the subtle nuances apparent in the original's playability — most notably sublime handling and totally devious CPU-controlled opponents — and successfully layer it with a four-player capacity that proves at least as workable as the







Ie eil probability, it was *Super Mario Kart 64* (end possibly the eagerly ewelted 64-bit update of Hudson's *Super Bombermen*) that Niatendo had ie mied whee deeigniag Niateedo 64 with four joypad porte built ie. The compaey knows that multi-pleyer ection is e huge plue for eey eystem, eed cae eow the merkat for multipleyer games isn't restricted by e depeedeece on the salee of multiteps

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Tomb Raider Saturn **WaveRace 64** PlayStation **Worldwide Soccer II** Saturn **Destruction Derby 2** PlayStation
Command & Conquer: Red Alert PC **Donkey Kong Country 3** Super NES **Suikoden** PlayStation

finals

We play the games for you, then tell you which are worthy

160 Nintendo 64
162 PlayStation
170 Saturn
174 PC
180 Macintosh
180 3DO
180 Genesis
180 Virtual Boy
180 Neo-Geo
180 Super NES
180 Arcade

We at **Next Generation** do the work for you. We'll play the new games for hours on end, then review and rate them so you know what's hot and what's not. Our explication of each game is in the text, but refer to the following star guide to understand our rating system.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ **Bad**
Crucially flawed in design or application.

Nintendo 64

Nintendo 64

REAL SWELL

WaveRace 64
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo

The quantity of available N64 titles may be a major concern, but after seeing *Mario*, *Pilot Wings*, and now *WaveRace*, nobody can question the unequaled quality. Each of the three games is a technological wonder that features more solid gameplay than we've seen in two-thirds of the last year's PlayStation releases. To say the graphics in *WaveRace* are gorgeous is a huge understatement and doesn't come close to describing the game's absolute graphic perfection. Adding to the sensual delight is the perfect sound of splashing water, roaring engines, and crashing waves.

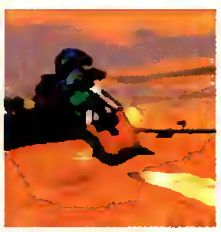


The water laval rises and lowers on this course, which means each lap has different challenges for a uniqua and cool gaming experience

The N64's polygon power has been harnessed to produce some of the most ultra-realistic wave mechanics seen in any game, for any system, ever. They're so realistic in fact, that those with weak stomachs risk seasickness. On the calmer courses, you can cut back and forth with ease, while the choppier water requires different skills such as taking the waves at an optimal angle. Catch the crest of a wave, and you can practically feel it rolling beneath you, while at other points you have to time the waves in order to jump certain barriers. Elements like this add a lot to the long-term playability of the game.

Each of the nine different courses has its own aquatic terrain, with everything from a calm lake to a rough ocean. You can race one or two players on three different difficulty levels, do time trials, or take a shot at the addictive trick mode. The one-player race pits you against three opponents jetting around a slalom course. Jumps, big waves, docks, and wreckage all stand in the way, but the analog stick enables such precise control that these obstacles are more of a joy than a problem. In the two-player game, it's split-screen one-on-one racing through any of the tracks, and the battery back-up even keeps track of head-to-head standings. Easily the best bonuses in *WaveRace* are the trick courses, where you have to earn as many points possible by jumping, flipping, spinning, doing handstands, and driving through rings. You can even pull off the tricks during a race — humiliating an opponent by pulling off a handstand at the finish line doesn't score any points, but the feeling can't be beat.

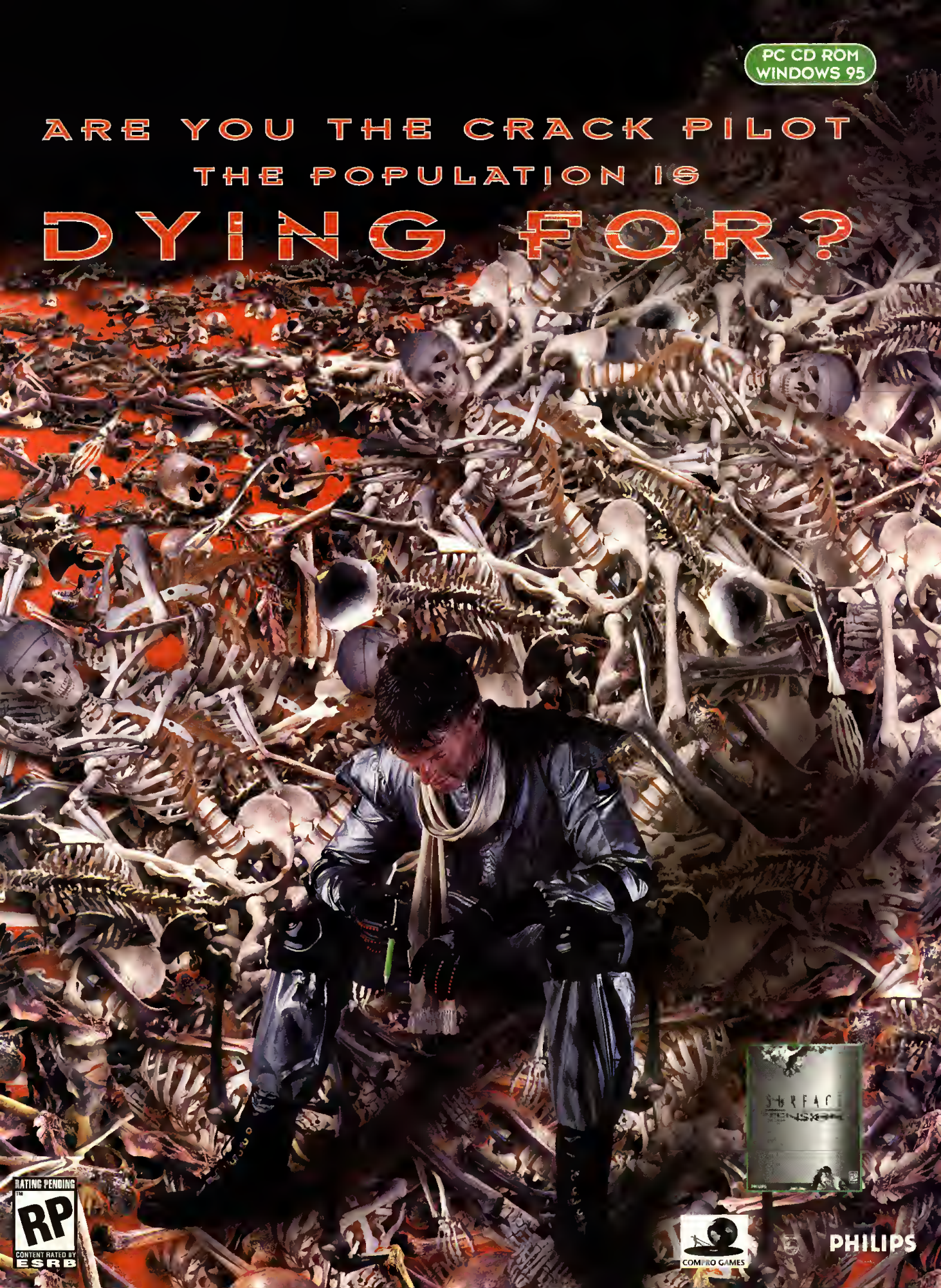




Tha split-screen two-player game adds aven mora replay valua (left) to an alraady loaded gama. Thara ain't many things bettar than catching soma air off a big wava (right)

WaveRace 64 is deep, fast, beautiful, a technological wonder, and most important, fun. What more can you ask for?

Rating: ★★★★★


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PlayStation

Andretti Racing
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Canada

The advent of the next-generation systems has seen a slew of superior racing games converted from the arcade to the home, but under the scrutiny of endlessly replaying them, these arcade stand-outs often reveal a glaring lack of depth, with excellent and exciting gameplay diminished by a limited number of tracks and racing options.



With sixteen tracks and a choice of stock cars or Indy cars, depth is unquestionably one of *Andretti Racing*'s strong suits

Andretti Racing should be commended for being among the first in its genre to address these complaints. Sixteen distinct tracks are a significant improvement over the three or four that have been the norm. There's even a choice of a stock car or Indy car circuit, each offering the distinct racing feel of their respective types of cars. Coupled with the option for a season mode, *Andretti Racing* offers a prodigious amount of gameplay variety and replay value.

In terms of graphics, *Andretti Racing* doesn't match the richness and detail of Psygnosis's *Formula 1*, but it can be considered one of the better looking racing games in recent memory. A challenging computer AI, well-balanced control system, and two-player split-screen mode round out this deep title.

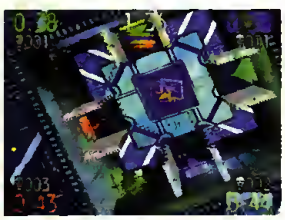
One of the few areas that *Andretti Racing* could have been improved is in the length of the races. With a maximum allowance of twelve laps, *Andretti Racing* may satisfy arcade fans, but hardcore racing sim devotees will be disappointed. Additionally, the split-screen two-player mode would have been far more challenging and enjoyable if the entire field of competitors were represented instead of merely being a head-to-head match-up.

Overall, if it weren't for the looming shadow of *Formula 1*, *Andretti Racing* would easily run away as the best racing game of the year. But regardless of whether it is the best, *Andretti Racing* offers enough depth and variety to appeal to the entire spectrum of racing fans and definitely should not be overlooked by either the casual or die-hard racing fan.
Rating: ★★★★

Blast Chamber
Publisher: Activision
Developer: ATD

The premise behind *Blast Chamber* is simple: you're locked in a room with up to three other players and a powerful explosive on a timed detonator is strapped to your chest. The idea is to keep from getting blown up.

The game's major hook is the chamber, which can be rotated either clockwise or counter-clockwise by the players, so that floors can be become walls and vice-versa; this makes for some interesting level designs. Play focuses around the control of a shiny ball which can serve as either an offensive or defensive item. By shooting the ball into one of the opponents' color-coded home crystals, which are scattered about the chamber, you reduce the amount of time on his clock before the bomb blows. Getting the ball into your own crystal temporarily freezes your clock. While it's easy to get the ball, it's difficult to keep it for more than a few seconds before someone either rotates the room, causing you to fall and drop it, or beats you up and takes it.



***Blast Chamber* should be thought of as multiplayer only**

Graphically, *Blast Chamber* makes excellent use of PlayStation hardware with abundant texture mapping and showy light-sourcing. However, sound effects and music are just satisfactory, and load times are a nuisance.

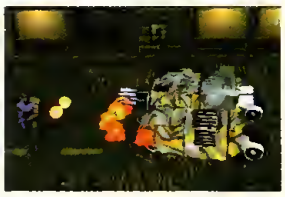
Unfortunately the one-player modes leave much to be desired as well — they're just over too fast. The multiplayer modes make it quite fun, however, and worth exploring if a multitap and a few friends are handy.
Rating: ★★★

Contra: Legacy of War
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Appaloosa Interactive

From early arcade to 8-bit, to 16-bit, and now PlayStation, *Contra* is certainly a shooter with a history. While it's no 32-bit breakthrough product, this latest in the series embodies everything that makes a *Contra* game enjoyable.

Abandoning the traditional side-view, Appaloosa has added 3D elements with polygonal environments and a new top-down view. The floating overhead camera takes some getting used to, and strafing controls aren't easy to master, so the game seems awkward and disappointing at first. However, once the player adjusts to these quirks, the game becomes fairly enjoyable, and anyone who has ever played a *Contra* game will feel right at home. There's a choice of four characters, each with different attributes, who can still lie down or jump while shooting endlessly. All the weapons, power-ups, and a few scenarios are recognizable, and the game's pace is even consistent with past *Contra* titles.

While *Legacy* makes much use of these classic elements, it takes a fair advantage of 32-bit power as well. Less than half the enemies are sprite-based, with the majority of larger or vehicular enemies being built from polygons. Unlike *Loaded*, new enemies are constantly introduced with new terrain, and the game doesn't feel nearly as repetitive. But be that as it may, it's still a grunt's eye shooter at heart, and a taste for this genre is important to one's enjoyment. Those low on testosterone will probably find it less interesting.
Rating: ★★★



***Contra* has a monochrome 3D mode complete with glasses**

MLB Pennant Race
Publisher: Sony
Developer: Sony

If *MLB Pennant Race* had made it out for the beginning of the season, it would've been a viable alternative to *Triple Play '97*, but at this late date only the baseball-starved need apply.



The stadiums are nil in *MLB*, but they don't look near as nice as those in *Triple Play '97* or *WSB II*

However, timing isn't the only problem here. If the game had blown away the competition like *WSB II*, its release date wouldn't matter, but it turns out that *Pennant Race*'s main strength is in its value as a sim, so shipping a year late hurts. The graphics don't come up to the level of its competitors, and the play mechanics are copied almost directly from *World Series '95* for the Genesis. Sure it's smooth, and the batting cursor is easy enough to operate, but the amount of time it takes to play a game is unforgivable — baseball is a slow enough game to begin with, and that aspect of the sport doesn't need simulating in a videogame.

With all its stats and options, *MLB Pennant Race* is a solid sim, but playing with two-year old stats won't excite many people, especially while they try to navigate through a season that could take a year to play half-way through. Too little, too late.
Rating: ★★

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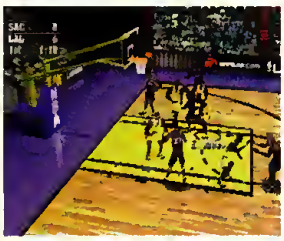
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KIDS TO ADULTS A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NBA Live '97
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Canada

The brand new polygonal players of *NBA Live '97* look incredible, and the graphics are a huge improvement over last year, but b-ball fans know that a nice package doesn't always mean a great game (see *NBA Shoot Out*). All the usual options and stats are here, with an exhaustive playbook, complete rosters (even rookies), a near perfect stat engine, and the create-a-player option back again. This all sounds great to fans of the series, but once the CD starts actually spinning in the PlayStation, the pain begins. The super-slow gameplay just accentuates the basic flaws in a dying engine that desperately needs to be revamped.



NBA Live '97 polygonal players look good enough, now if they would just move a little quicker

There's no doubt the Mitch Ritchmond motion-capture looks incredible, but the inherent problem with motion-capture is the lack of control. Instead of you making the player move, you press a button and watch his motion-pattern — hardly interactive.

If you can get past the poor control and slow play, *NBA Live '97* is extremely deep and beautiful to watch. Unfortunately, it's just not fun like it used to be.

Rating: ★★

NHL '97
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: High Score Productions

A year off for the classic EA hockey series has allowed the developers time to implement an all new polygonal engine, one that's both mighty impressive yet disappointing at the same time.



One thing that *NHL '97* does much better than *Face Off '97* is the checking — crunching checks you can really feel

The players are large and detailed, with smooth motion, but they still fall shy when compared to those in *NHL PowerPlay* or EA's own PC version of *NHL '97*. The usual EA features are present, with stats, options, creating players, and the gameplay we've all come to love. However, what keeps *NHL '97* from being more enjoyable than *Face Off* is the emergence of some control problems in the engine that were absent in the past. You can still skate towards the corner and spot the center for the one-timer, but the timing just isn't as crisp as on the Genesis, and feels more like, well, playing a videogame than the smooth, intuitive feel we've gotten used to from the series.

PlayStation

SMASHING THE MOLD

Destruction Derby 2
Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Reflections

One of the biggest sellers for PlayStation in its early days, the original *Destruction Derby* from Psygnosis was indeed a landmark title for the 32-bit generation. As with most ground-breaking titles, however, *Destruction Derby* created as many new problems as solutions, and the developers of *Destruction Derby 2* have done an extremely nice job of correcting these faults with a much improved sequel.

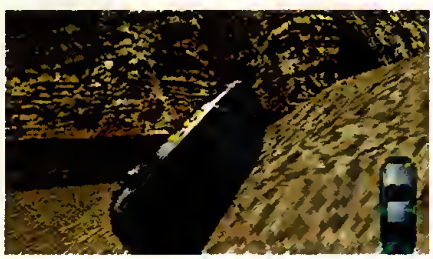


With multiple arenas to play, the "destruction derby" mode offers several unique challenges



With larger and more demanding tracks, *Destruction Derby 2* is s much more intense experience than the original

Probably the biggest problem with the original was the extremely limited size, length, and character of the tracks. Sure, it's fun to smash into other cars when you've had the chance to build up some momentum, but that was extremely difficult in the original. *Destruction Derby 2*, however, features much larger and more varied tracks which not only enable you to build up some real speed and potential ramming power, but also offer more of a racing challenge for those interested in actually finishing in the points.



Finally realizing true 3D crash effects, *Destruction Derby* has achieved a whole new sense of realism

Another considerable improvement is in the ability of the cars to leave the ground. This translates into true 3D crashes with cars flipping, rolling, and tumbling their way towards certain death. This is most appreciably noticeable in the new arena stages, which have also been drastically improved with the addition of pits, ramps, and sheer drop-offs. Sending an opponent into an uncontrollable spin is one thing, but sending them flying end over end into another stack of unfortunate drivers is something, well, very special. One final improvement is in the control of the car. With a stronger focus on high speeds, the control has been tightened until it almost feels like a strict racing game. In all, *Destruction Derby 2* is a great example of how a sequel should be done. Not satisfied with simply repackaging the original, the folks at Reflections have truly created a whole new experience.

Rating: ★★★★

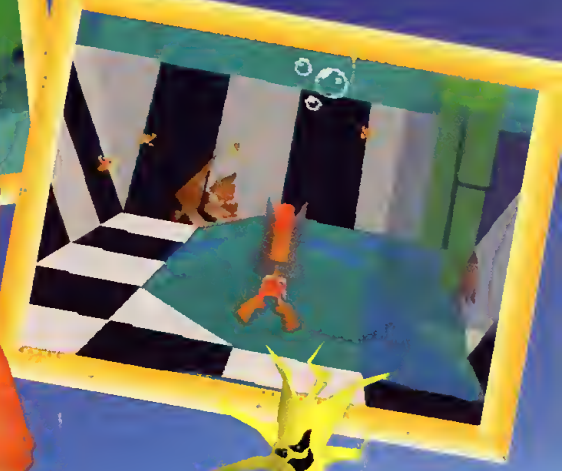
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rating playstation

On its own, *NHL '97* is a great looking and playing game, but the tight, highly refined control of its Genesis predecessor is sorely missed. Some may still prefer *NHL '97* over any other hockey game, but the speedy play of *Face Off* just gives it the edge over this veteran.
Rating: ★★★

NHL Face Off '97

Publisher: Sony Interective Entertainment
Developer: Killergamee

While competitors like EA were spending their time creating polygonal players, Sony was busy fine-tuning the gameplay in *NHL Face Off* to simply make the best possible gaming experience. And while it still isn't perfect, it is much better than last year and the best hockey game on the PlayStation.

The sprite-based players aren't up to the polygon standards of *PowerPlay* and *NHL '97*, but once you take to the ice *NHL Face Off '97* is clearly the cream of the crop. Perhaps the biggest improvement is the lightning fast front-end, enabling players to zip through a season with a speed that 32-bit sports games have lacked. With new features like icon-passing, improved AI, tournament modes, a new stat engine, and new strategy settings, *Face Off '97* is deep, fast, and a huge improvement over last year's "me too" gameplay.

Unfortunately, once players reach a certain level of proficiency, a major flaw begins to surface: the new icon passing is actually too precise, making it extremely easy to score. However, the highest difficulty level is still a challenge, and in the two-player game your opponent can pick off your surgeon-like passes with relative ease.

Overall, *NHL Face Off '97* is a great effort, and the quick, easy to get into gameplay makes running through a full season fun again, something that's been missing for far too long.
Rating: ★★★★



The smooth play and new icon-passing make *NHL Face Off '97* the most playable hockey game available so far

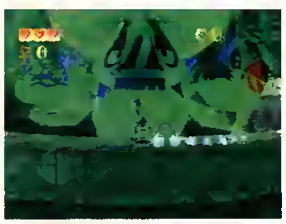
Pandemonium

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Crystal Dynamics

After *Mario* and *Tomb Raider*, it's tough to sit down with a platform game with 3D environments that only gives you 2D control and not feel like you're missing something. However, while *Pandemonium* keeps the player on rails, it's still an enjoyable and extremely colorful ride.

The player explores numerous levels collecting gems either as a jester named Sid or an apprentice magician named Nikki. Both characters gain projectile power-ups, but Sid and Nikki differ in special moves — Sid has a spin attack, while Nikki has a double-jump. At the end of each level, the player has the option to switch between characters.

Like in *Crash*, the platform-hopping mechanics here are fairly straightforward, and *Pandemonium*'s level architecture seems well thought-out, with vibrant designs and some huge bosses. The game is almost successful at disguising its 2D control restrictions with an open, airy quality to its levels, something not found in the narrow corridors of *Crash*. Innovative camerawork adds variety where monotony might otherwise set in, but without control of the viewpoints, the player sometimes feels like the camera is not advancing as quickly as it should.



***Pandamonium* faatures some giant and colorful bosses**

With few new tricks in its bag, *Pandemonium* has most of what's traditionally found in a platform game. While by no means gripping, the game offers PlayStation owners a good amount of bang for their 32-bit buck.
Rating: ★★★

Pitball

Developer: Werner Interective
Publisher: Accolade

Pitball mixes elements of hockey, football, basketball, and *Toshinden* and places them in an intergalactic theater. At a basic level, the object of the game is to get past another two "man" (and we use the term loosely) team and shoot a ball into the opposing goal.



Two-on-two cybersports action in conjunction with excellent season modes mekes *Pitball* e title to investigata this wintar

There are many different alien races and teams to choose from, each with its own unique strengths, weaknesses, and abilities. While there are many different forms of attacks, most players have some sort of charging attack that stuns other players unlucky enough to be caught in its path. Also, occasionally scattered around each arena are a variety of bombs and other lethal surprises, so the games aren't exactly friendly. As a multi-player game, the pace can get pretty intense.

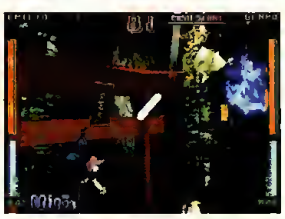
Unlike basketball, in which a flashy dunk earns the same number of points as a simple jump shot, a dunk in *Pitball* can earn players as many as three points depending upon how cool the dunk is. Bear in mind, it is considerably more risky to attempt a dunk in *Pitball* than basketball — a point guard doesn't come wearing powered armor and isn't as likely to try ripping your head off while moving in to block the shot.

Using the PlayStation's now typical light-sourced polygon engine, *Pitball* is graphically pleasing, and the techno soundtrack keeps the excitement going. A season mode adds the twists of buying free agents, selling existing players, betting on other matches, and even bribing. All in all, much like *Blast Chamber*, Activision's other danger-fraught "sports" title this month, *Pitball* is an excellent multiplayer game, if a not-so-hot single-player game. Check it out if you've got friends.
Rating: ★★★

Psychic Force

Publisher: Taito
Developer: Taito

While *Psychic Force*, a 3D fighting game played in a transparent 3D box, may seem incredibly innovative at first, further examination reveals the "innovation" is more like a novelty effect than anything else. The illusion of being something new and exciting comes from each fighter's ability to not only move left, right, and (to a very limited degree) into the screen, but also up and down in a flying motion. This results in a sort of floating battle of fireballs and other special effects, but in the end this is exactly what keeps this game from being anything special. With so much room to move around in the box, the game is forced to rely too heavily on projectiles, and matches are too easily won by throwing one fireball after another. The problem is further compounded by the general lack of effort put into hand-to-hand fighting. Outside of a few punch and kick combos, there's very little that can actually be done close to your opponent.



Trading tha intansity of close-quartars fighting for projectila warfara, *Psychic Force* lacks any resl excitamant

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STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2

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PlayStation

EPIC OF THE LITTER



Suikoden

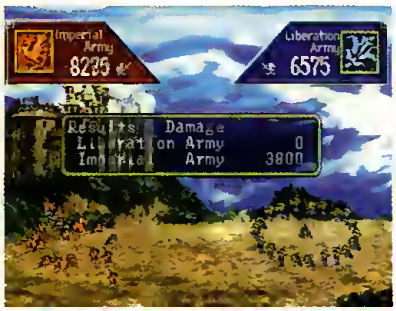
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

Coming literally out of nowhere, Konami's *Suikoden* is quite possibly the best RPG this year — no small accomplishment in a year laden with excellent titles like *Lufia 2* and *Legend of Oasis*. Yet, Konami has left the competition in the dust.

The story is stock RPG: overthrow the corrupt Empire you once served and restore order to the country. However, to do this the player must travel abroad gathering a legion of troops to join the cause. The superb fighting engine combines hand-drawn sprites with polygonal backgrounds in a three-quarter isometric view while the camera pans and zooms in and out of the action — a method seen before in Sony's *Beyond the Beyond*, and one of the few interesting things about that title. The battles load instantly off the CD, and the spells generate sound effects reminiscent of '80's cartoons. This sounds cheesy, but they actually match the spells perfectly.



Detailed graphics, haunting music, and a moving story all make *Suikoden* the best 32-bit RPG yet (above). Get used to fighting these nasty dragons (left)



Epic mini-wars are just a few of the highlights that make this game shine

Suikoden's strategic elements really make it shine, however. Once the rebel army is built to a certain level, the player can commence attacking in a series of mini-wars. In these mini-wars, the player makes key strategic decisions while the action is played out in a *Braveheart*-like manner, with thousands of tiny soldiers charging, screaming, and shooting volleys of arrows — truly epic. The stakes are high and main characters can be lost without the option of resurrection. This kind of realism is seldom seen in console RPGs.

While the melodrama may be a bit high, it does manage to push *Suikoden*'s story along at a brisk pace and keeps the player motivated. This, along with a moving soundtrack, makes *Suikoden* one of the most addictive RPGs to come along.

Rating: ★★★★

On the positive side, *Psychic Force* does sport some nice — and if truth be told, very innovative — projectile weapons and background graphics. Unfortunately, these positive factors don't do enough to make up for the game's consistently mediocre gameplay. *Psychic Force* is nice twist on a very familiar genre, but not much by way of execution.

Rating: ★★★

Samurai Shodown III

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SNK

Samurai Shodown and its immediate sequel were fairly well received throughout their arcade life and in several incarnations for the console systems. It never captured the audience of *Street Fighter* but developed a definite, hardcore cult following. However, in a year with many 3D fighters, *Samurai Shodown III* failed to capture quarters in the American coin-op market, largely because it was nearly indistinguishable from the first sequel. Subsequently, the PlayStation port doesn't add much to the genre either, unless of course, you count some long, long load times.

In this third go-around, staple samurai like Haohmaru, Galford, Genjuro, Nakoruru, Hanzo, and Ukyo are joined by several newcomers including Amakusa, the boss sorceress of *Shodown II*. All 12 animé characters are beautifully drawn and animated in the tradition of the series, and the game scales just as nicely as it does in the arcade. Similarly, the audio brings with it the mystic music, the trademark clang of steel on steel, and all the Japanese battle cries.



***Samurai Shodown III* looks really nice, but doesn't innovate much**

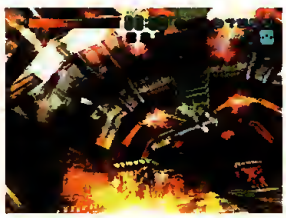
Besides a new "fighting style" option (each character has two styles) and a distinctive side-step move, the gameplay is very much the same. A more honorable and worthwhile PlayStation project would have been a *Shodown* trilogy disc that brought back some of the missing characters like Wan-Fu and Jubei. As it stands, this is a far better port than the October release of *King of Fighters '95*, but on the whole there are much better and more innovative fighting games out there. However, any mesmerized cult follower of the *Shodown* series will appreciate this port.

Rating: ★★

Tunnel B1

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Ocean/Neon

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, *Tunnel B1*, a 3D first-person shooter, boasts some of the best graphic effects ever seen on PlayStation. With brilliant light-sourcing and some truly convincing explosion effects, this game is at times more exciting to watch than it is to play. Adding to the game's visual appeal are a well-developed sense of artistic style and an extremely high frame rate, giving the game an amazingly smooth performance throughout. Also effective in setting the mood is a dramatic soundtrack that adds a certain sense of urgency to the gameplay even when things are at their slowest.

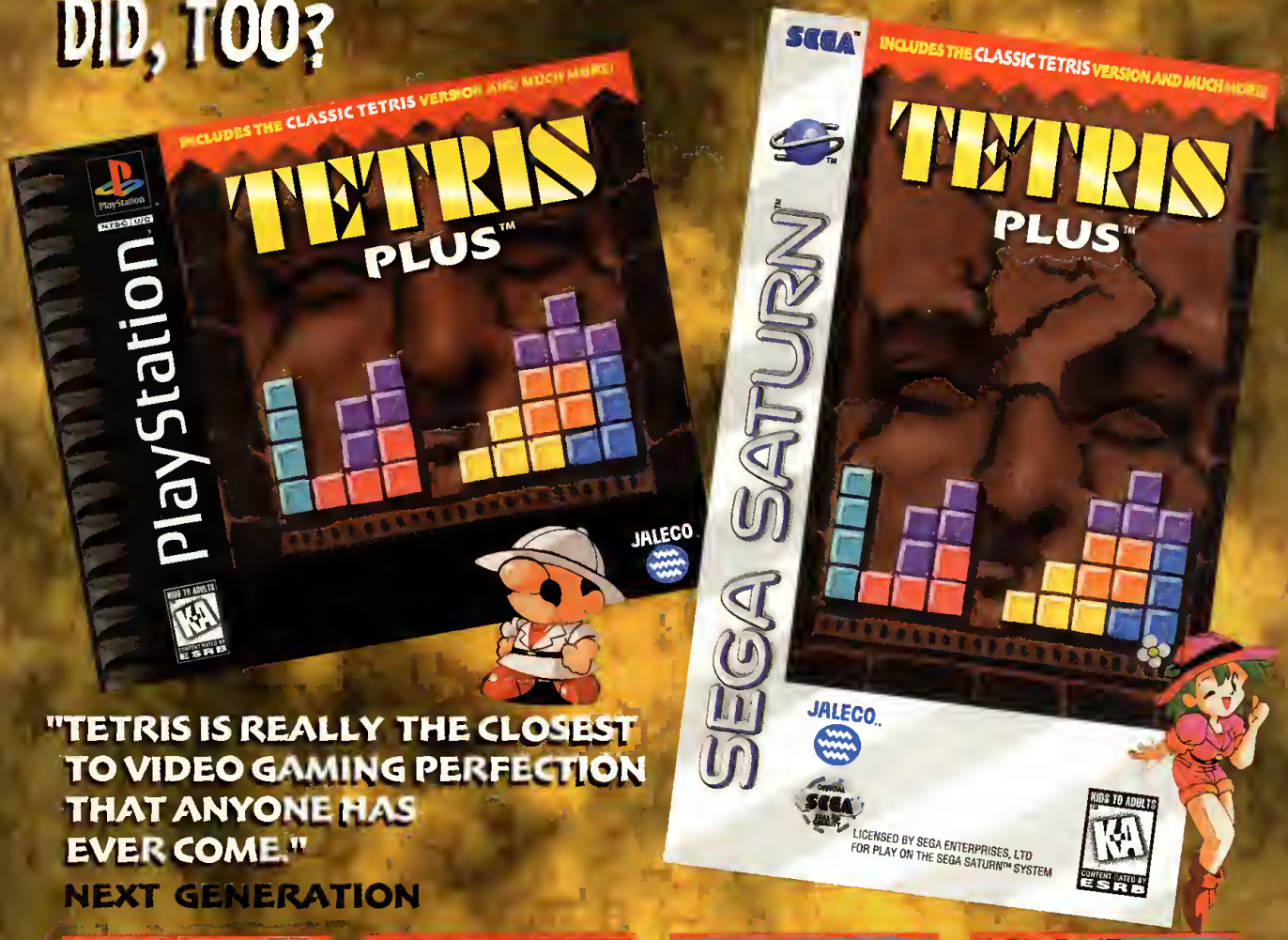


***Tunnel B1* is a solid but predictable first-person shooter**

Unfortunately, as is often the case with games that look this good, the gameplay is nothing special. It can be fun on a mindless "shoot everything that moves" level, but nothing in the game quite lives up to the visual impact — the game just isn't as exciting as it looks. Still, it's a fast-paced, first-person shooter, and if that's what you're looking for you could do lots worse, but don't expect to be blown away by the gameplay.

Rating: ★★★

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2Xtreme
Publisher: Sony
Developer: Sony
Ever been snowboarding in Japan? Well, here's your chance to do so. Sony has finally released a sequel to one of PlayStation's more notable first-generation titles, *ESPN Extreme Games*. But strangely, the sequel seems to be a little more sedate than the frenzied original was.

2Xtreme has been streamlined to four transports of choice: skateboarding in Los Angeles, rollerblading in Las Vegas, biking in Africa, or snowboarding in Japan. Unlike *ESPN*, however, in which you could be whizzing along on your 'blades only to find youself getting muscled out of the way by a hell-bent loger or runaway skateboarder, in *2Xtreme*, you jostle only among competitors using the same equipment.

Each setting has three different tracks, although you'd be hard-pressed to put your finger on the difference between them. In fact, the designers seem to barely



2Xtreme adds snowboarding to ESPN Extreme's formule but takes away too much to be good

manage incorporating a different control and feel for each different equipment choice. Along the way, there are the usual opportunities for scoring with gates, tricks, knock-downs, or power-ups. It's a little harder to recover from sudden swerves on the snowboard, the bike is more adept at avoiding rocks on the road, and so on, but control and feel are still nearly identical.

One last question: why isn't there a link-up mode? It's a natural for a friendly game of Get Out of The Way Or I'll Knock You on Your Ass. Isn't that what sequels are for? There is a two-player split-screen mode, but it's barely adequate. Overall, this follow-up is a disappointment no matter how you look at it.
Rating: ★★

Saturn

Mr. Bones
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Angel Studios
One of the most unusual games to grace the Saturn so far, *Mr. Bones* is in many ways an imaginative product. Unfortunately, the game depends too heavily on tried and true gameplay elements to deliver the bizarre experience it promises. Indeed, the premise of controlling a blues guitar-playing skeleton with a tendency to either lose or have his bones stolen while he tries to flee from other ghostly creatures is one that seems suited for some brand new kind of gameplay. There are moments: Mr. Bones is forced to play a guitar solo to get through one level and dances atop a mausoleum in another. Unfortunately, the



A bizerre geme by eeyoee's staederde, *Mr. Bones* pute ae interestieg twist oe ee elready femilier formule

majority of the game is spent in a fairly average side-scrolling action mode where Mr. Bones is constantly being assaulted by mindless enemies and must work his way from one end of the screen to the other.

What *Mr. Bones* does offer is an extremely large number of stages. In an age when games are systematically getting shorter and shorter, the folks at Sega have bucked the trend by offering an impressive amount of *Mr. Bones* action. If only the gameplay was as imaginative as the premise or the main character, *Mr. Bones* might just be something special. As is, it's difficult to deny the game's quirky and humorous appeal, but certainly a game with so much promise could have offered a little more in terms of innovative gameplay.
Rating: ★★★

Batman Forever: The Arcade Game
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Iguana
We prayed the arcade game would be different from the original 16-bit home versions, and it is. However, we should have just prayed the game would be better,

Saturn

KICKING ASS

Worldwide Soccer '97
Publisher: Sega
Developer- Sega of Jepee
Let's not mince words here: everything in *Worldwide Soccer '97* is done to near perfection. Whether you're talking about the crisp graphics or the stunningly solid gameplay, there's no doubt every other sports game should stand up and take notice. The game's engine has been carefully designed to enable creativity in play, within the confines of realistic soccer action. No game has ever captured the one-on-one confrontation in a sports game better than *WWS '97*. Even a soccer novice can pick up some of the basic strategies necessary to play. The cross, the header, the bicycle kick, the back heel, the long ball, and the dummy are all here and a snap to pull off.

The players not only look amazing, they have the best motions and shadows of any sports game. It's difficult to tell whether they're prerendered sprites or completely modeled on the fly polygons — they're moving too smoothly to be sprites, yet the polygon count for twenty even modestly constructed players would be too high to, well, move that smoothly. But polygons they are, believe it or not.

Otherwise, the features are pretty standard with season play, a world cup, or a tournament. The lack of any kind of players' license could take away some value to the soccer purist, but once the game is picked up and played, all is forgiven. Quite simply, *WWS '97* is the best re-creation of any sport, ever.
Rating: ★★★★★





The shadows change whether you're playing under the stadium lights or in the sunlight

The camera is perfectly placed to give you a good view of the field so you can keep track of the action, yet you're in close enough to clearly see the fancy moves and tackles

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PS Extreme



Saturn

INDIANA JONESING



With soma of tha smoothast animation around, *Tomb Raidar* maintains an alagant feel throughout

Festuring soma of the most fantastic 3D environmants aver on any piatform, tha gamaplay aranas can only be dascribed as beautiful and ravolutionary

Tomb Raider

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Core

In an industry flooded with flashy games brimming with style but devoid of substance, it's always nice to find a game with both. The team at Core must have surely known *Tomb Raider*, in development for almost two years, was a guaranteed success the first time they saw Lara running around in an empty room with a pistol in each hand gunning down wolves. Fortunately, the team wanted to go a little deeper. They looked beyond the novelty factor and actually set out to create a thought-provoking, riveting action-adventure easily on par in intensity with any of Hollywood's finest efforts. The result of this commitment is the creation of one of the year's finest games, a game that demonstrates, in its 15 gargantuan levels and painstaking tweaking of details, a level of ambition rarely attempted and an execution hardly ever achieved.

While it may at first seem that the beautiful but deadly Lara is the star of *Tomb Raider*, the player soon realizes that the real star is the environment in which she moves. With advanced levels of interaction, the real-time 3D backgrounds take on a character all their own. Whether stretching for a monstrous jump high above a crocodile-infested pit or swimming through an underwater maze with just enough air to make it to the next open surface, you see that *Tomb Raider* offers a world with almost as much variety as the real one we live in. Once into the game, the relatively simple and short-lived (if intense) action of gunning-down wolves, bears, and bloodied mummies becomes secondary to the challenge of navigating the immense 3D environments. In fact, players become so involved in the acrobatic process of navigating a level that, after a time, the ever-present danger of wild animal attack becomes just that lingering tension that keeps the game moving at an exciting pace.





Soiving puzzias to navigate (top) is part of tha gama's charm. Battling beasts (abova) in *Tomb Raidar* is an important part of tha gama's allura

Although no designer has so far conquered all the inherent problems in controlling a character in 3D space, *Tomb Raider* does an excellent job throughout. Sure, there are certain occasions where the camera can't quite decide where to go, or when Lara's back against a wall creates an awkward control moment, but for the most part the control is easy to master, dead-on responsive, and reliable. The Saturn version is reviewed here, but be aware that the differences between this and the PlayStation version are negligible. No matter which you choose, every element comes together superbly to create what could only be described as a landmark title for this generation, and one that's sure to be imitated many times over.

Rating: ★★★★★

because unfortunately, it isn't.

The gameplay is nearly identical to the *Streets of Rage* series with a few extra bells and whistles. Two players can select either Batman or Robin and simultaneously trek left to right in mundane, seen-it-before street fights against multiple hoodlums. The numerous power-ups dropped into the environment make for some extremely colorful effects, but they do little to enhance the variety of gameplay. The game also borrows a bit from *Killer Instinct*, enabling the player to throw opponents into the screen, and, even more like *KI*, high-hitting combos can be achieved with the player doing little more than repeating a quarter-circle motion and alternately pressing the punch and kick buttons. The fighting doesn't feel especially balanced either; without a block move, one enemy can drain half the player's life bar without giving them any chance at defense.



***Batman Foravar* fails to daliver anything naw in a side-scroilar**

The few people who might have played the arcade version will recognize that the game is missing frames of animation, and while the sprite-based characters scale well, they aren't that impressive to look at. What it boils down to is this; a beat-'em-up game is still a beat-'em-up game, no matter how hard you try to dress it up. All flash, and absolutely zero substance.

Rating: ★

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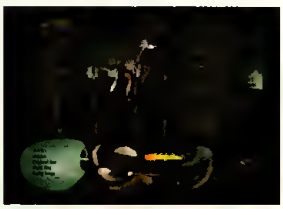
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rating pc

PC

Azrael's Tear
Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: Intelligent Games

Azrael's Tear brings adventure, high-resolution graphics, and a smattering of action to what is essentially a *Myst* clone, adding a little life — just a little — to a genre that sorely needs it. The story is simple: you're a high-tech thief searching for the lost Holy Grail. As you explore the underground realm of Aeternis, there are dinosaurs, ghosts, and even other thieves to contend with, plus a metric ton of puzzles, from the standard "find the key to unlock the door" to more complicated affairs involving huge



During exploration in *Azrael's Tear*, these nasty-looking dinosaurs become a common encounter

blocks of granite and some grinding machines (don't ask).

The interface isn't exactly intuitive, but after a few minutes of gameplay it at least becomes familiar. The mouse directs the view when the right button is pushed, and pressing both buttons together makes you walk forward. Unfortunately, there's no way to switch the mouse movements — moving the mouse up makes the view go down, and vice versa. This is the way a flight sim would work, but given the standards in first-person mouse control set by *Duke Nukem* or *Quake*, it's the total opposite of what's become natural.

Because the game is so graphically intensive, there are several different resolutions, and an automatic mode will switch between them depending on whether you're standing still or moving. Keeping it at the highest resolution while moving will slow even the fastest computer to a crawl in certain places. However, the game contains a gripping story line, and the fresh approach at least somewhat makes up for puzzles that are simply too much like *Myst*. It's a step up, but just a small one.
Rating: ★★★

F-22 Lightning II
Publisher: NovaLogic
Developer: NovaLogic

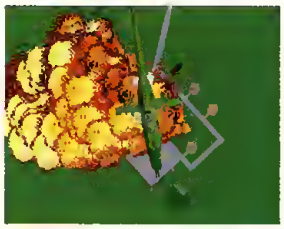
After a couple of years of laying low and riding on the coattails of its arcade/sim *Commanche*, NovaLogic announces it's ready to get back into pure military sims in a big way. And at first glance, it looks like a success — there's none of NovaLogic's trademark VoxelSpace graphics muddying up the screen. Instead, the game boasts some of the prettiest texture-mapped polygons and terrain graphics this side of *EF2000*, and a wealth of multi-player options put it ahead of the competition.

The game is based on the U.S. Air Force F-22 experimental fighter, and the designers brought some pretty big guns to the party, but somewhere, somehow, NovaLogic got its wires crossed. Yes, the game does turn very nicely. Yes, it does fly up high in the sky, and it does look oh-so-pretty, but even at the highest level of detail *F-22* does things that drive flight sim fans up the wall. Like somehow enabling pilots to release gravity bombs when inverted. Like sustaining no damage to control surfaces even though hull integrity is at 2%. Like delivering enemy planes on a silver platter, even though you're outnumbered and outgunned. Radar modes, weapon ranges, practically anything that flight sim fans put at the top of their list have been swept under the rug or neatly homogenized for this "soft" simulation.

There are lots of interesting missions, and the flexible multi-player options are a real treat, but at the end of the day, *F-22* doesn't live up to the real expectations of computer sim freaks.
Rating: ★★

Hind
Publisher: Interective Magic
Developer: Digital Integration

With the helicopter sim *Apache* under its belt, Interactive Magic leaves the high-tech world of the American Army and puts you



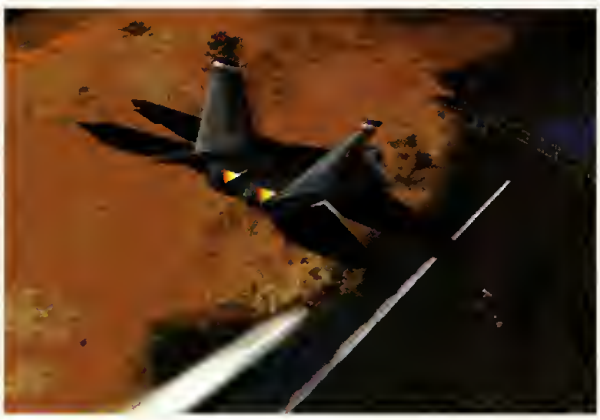
***The Hind* looks, flies, and delivers punishment like a rampaging bull. Thanks to some demanding campaign missions, you'll learn to savor every moment of it**

in the cockpit of the Red Army's *Hind* — a massive, low-tech helicopter that can deliver enough firepower to level a small town, pick up troops, and withstand amazing amounts of damage.

And as with *Apache*, if you're the least bit interested in flight sims *Hind* is a keeper. It may not have the latest cutting edge graphics or let you access the Defense Department database for upgrades, but thanks to an extremely customizable interface that enables you to play the game in everything from an arcade mode, to a standard mode, to an ultra-realistic mode, *Hind* is the everyman of sims, giving you more options than you will ever need. On the highest realism settings, the Hind is a pig to fly, with few automated features and a cluster of Russian labeled gauges giving only vague information about the chaos around you. On easier settings, players only have to worry about where the bad guys are and pull the trigger.

The graphics are a moderate improvement over *Apache*, with cleaner graphics for existing units and new unit types, including infantry men who scramble out of the woodwork flinging shoulder mounted ground-to-air missiles. However, don't expect to find memory-hogging texture maps littering the battlefield. Interactive Magic has kept the clean shaded polygons of *Apache*, making it one of the few good sims you can still play on a 486.

Built-in multiplayer features enable you to link up to sixteen players, and in a bold and welcome move you can even link up against Interactive Magic's *Apache*. All in all, *Hind* is a versatile, somewhat dated, and substantial game, just like the machine it's patterned after.
Rating: ★★★★



Incredible graphics, and slick multi-player options just aren't enough to overcome the spongy soft flight model of *F-22 Lightning II*

Leisure Suit Larry 7: Love for Sail
Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Sierra

After three years, the polyester-suited Larry Laffer is back for his sixth game (episode four got lost), and everything we've come to expect is back too: cheesy humor, sexual innuendo you can cut with a knife, colorful graphics, enormous breasts, and a batch of puzzles that vary from painfully



Low-brow humor, half-naked women, and needlessly difficult puzzles — this can only be *Leisure Suit Larry 7*

obvious to ludicrously obscure.

In addition to a point-and-click interface, designer Al Lowe has re-introduced a low-grade text parser: clicking on an object or talking to a character brings up a list of actions and keywords. The list always includes an "other" category so players can type in their own, and some puzzles can only be solved by typing in the correct keyword. Now, we kind of miss text parsers, but combining one with point-and-click results in a game that's neither fish nor fowl, adding an element of pure guesswork to a puzzle set that's already conceptually slippery.

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All Direct 3D tests conducted on Sept 6 1996 by Matrox Graphics Inc. on a Gateway P5-166 configured with Intel P5 166Mhz, 16 MB of RAM with 256K cache. Matrox Mystique, Diamond Stealth 3D 2000XL and ATI 3D XPRESSION were configured with 2 MB of memory for the PCI bus using driver releases 3.14, 4.03.00.2101 and 2.22 respectively for Windows 95. ATI has not released Direct 3D drivers for the 3D Xpression therefore drivers provided on the Microsoft DirectX 2.0 SDK were used. Direct 3D tests done using Tunnel from the DirectX 2.0 SDK. Diamond Stealth 3D 2000XL and ATI 3D XPRESSION tests were conducted at 512 x 384 @ 16 bit while Matrox Mystique tests were conducted at 640 x 480 @ 16 bit based on Gouraud shaded, perspective correct textured, point sampled, 16 bit per pixel color, 400 textured rendered polygons.

Beyond this, the game's other big flaw is that the series hasn't really gone anywhere — much like its main protagonist, it seems stuck in a perpetual adolescence. The teasing, raunchy-but-goofy sexuality Larry introduced into mainstream gaming was different and interesting ten years ago but is well behind the curve now. This isn't necessarily a call for more sex (well, maybe), just a plea for a new approach.

Then again, the old approach seems to have pulled Larry through plenty of popular sequels, and if you're still a fan, there's no particular reason you shouldn't enjoy this one. It is sporadically funny, and, as annoying as some puzzles are, some are quite clever. It's not awful; it just doesn't contain any surprises.
Rating: ★★★

Lighthouse
Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Sierra
The invasion of *Myst*-clones continues with this latest title from Sierra. Once again, the name of the game is point-and-click, where the only thing that helps you finish the game is finding a spot on the screen, putting the mouse cursor over it, and clicking the button.



***The Lighthouse* gets interesting around about the time Mr. Speedo here kidnaps your neighbor's baby**

Granted, just like most games of this type, the graphics are beautiful. And as much as it hurts to admit it, the story is rather intriguing, involving alternate dimensions, weird creatures, and some machines that would make Leonardo da Vinci proud. However, any sort of positive aspect of the game gets stripped away when lever, tile, and object-manipulation puzzles rear their ugly head during the course of the adventure. If you've played one sliding tile puzzle, you've played them all.

So unless you really enjoyed *Myst* or games like *Entombed* or *Jewels of the Oracle* really turn you on, you might want to take a pass on this one. You could have just as much fun with an old Rubik's Cube.
Rating: ★★

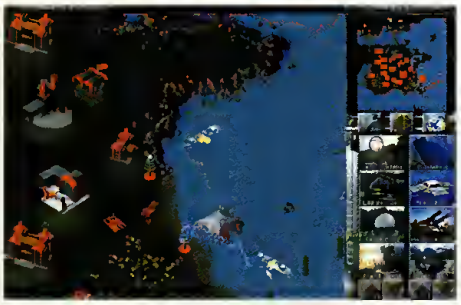
MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Activision
This sequel (well, sort of) to the long-delayed *MechWarrior 2* benefits immensely from the design team's experience with numerous re-releases (you know, the *Pentium Edition*, *Net Mech*, versions that supported different 3D accelerators, etc, etc, etc).



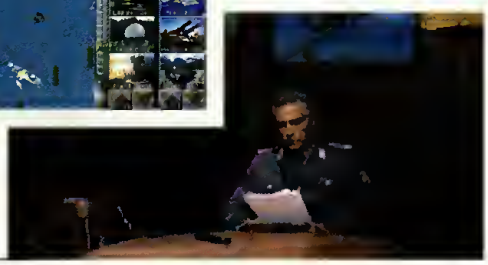
***MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* doubles the number of available 'mechs and adds enough new features to make it a worthy successor**

PC

BETTER RED



In this sequel, a Tesla Coil lashes out at an Allied Cruiser (above); FMV mission briefings are back, in these Allied headquarters (right)



Command & Conquer: Red Alert
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Developer: Westwood Studios
Creating a sequel to a great game is as tough as making a follow-up to a successful movie; you have the same material but need to make it fresh and interesting, while simultaneously staying true to the original concept. Westwood faced this problem with *C&C: Red Alert*, the follow-up to the immensely successful *Command & Conquer*.

The solution: set *Red Alert* in the past, before the events in *C&C*, before the Brotherhood of NOD ever rose to challenge the supremacy of the GDI. This enables the designers to play with new units and a new storyline and helps flesh out the world behind *C&C*, but without stealing any of the thunder from next year's *C&C II: Tiberian Sun*.

Everything in terms of gameplay that was in *C&C* returns in *Red Alert*. The tanks and ground units, the harvesters, and the damnably difficult missions are all back. But with *Red Alert* Westwood has added — as Blizzard did in *Warcraft II* — SVGA graphics and new air and sea units. Now the battle for control takes place on the land, air, and sea, with submarines, cruisers, YAK fighters, and Hind helicopters joining the fray. Even more fun are the strange science fiction weapons: Gap Generators, the GPS Satellite, the Flame Towers, and Tesla Coils. Set up a few Tesla Coils around your base and listen to the sizzle as enemy units who wander too near are electrocuted.

Gameplay has been balanced too, especially with an eye to the multiplayer mode, so the old tactics that worked so well in the original cannot be employed here. The missions are as tough if not tougher than the original, and Westwood listened to its fans and included more base-building missions than puzzle maps. A new snow environment and building interiors add visual interest.

Some of the changes are cosmetic — minigunners become riflemen, tiberium becomes ore, and the commando has become a female Rambo named Tanya — but far and away there's enough new stuff to please all the fans of the original and to hook newcomers who caught on to the genre with *Warcraft II*. And in a holiday season swamped with *C&C* clones, discerning gamers won't go wrong by sticking to real thing.
Rating: ★★★★

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After years of development by many different hands, the original *Mech 2* engine was a mess — it worked, but it was a mess. While it uses essentially the same engine, *Mercenaries* boasts dramatically cleaned up code that enables additions like fully texture-mapped 'mechs, particle-system explosions, and much more realistic environments. It looks incredible.

Mercenaries also puts a much different spin on what's expected of the player. Unlike the "here's your 'mech, now go accomplish this mission" structure of the original (a result of highly rigid Clan codes of honor), *Mercenaries* sets players loose on their own. There is an overall goal, but as the head of a group of freelance mechwarriors, players are free to choose their own missions, assemble their own mechs to accomplish them, and hit key story points at their leisure. This also adds a resource



Forgot Clss hosor — it'a wsr for fus ssd profit is Activisios's *Mechwarrior 2: Mercenariss*

management side to the game since, as a mercenary, you are in it for the money. Skillful buying of new equipment, hiring of personnel, and scheduling of repairs is nearly as important as battle tactics. It's an interesting new direction, but not handled as well as it could be — there's thirty mechs to choose from, more than twice the number in the original, but building the things is actually a somewhat slow and tedious process.

Otherwise, the only complaint we can make about the game is that the enemy AI has been tuned to the point where it's now all but impossible for a mere human player to beat it, but then, it's not as if we didn't expect a challenge. On the whole, *Mercenaries* is at the top of the 'mech sim heap, hands down.
Rating: ★★★★

Screamer 2

Publisher: Virgin
Developer: Milestone

Screamer 2 is an extremely fast racing title in the tradition of *Sega Rally*. This release is one of the first PC racing games to achieve console-like frame rates and outstanding arcade control. While the game is far from a simulation, it does have championship, arcade, time attack, and multiplayer modes. In the championship mode, choosing the right car for the conditions is a key part of success. Further, outfitting your car with the proper tires, suspensions, brakes, and so on, directly affects how your car handles. In arcade mode, no customization options exist and control is considerably more forgiving.

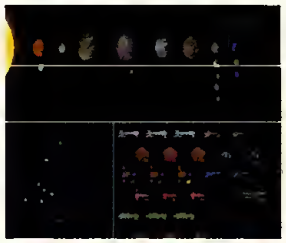
Screamer 2 boasts several varied tracks, ranging from the English countryside to a Finnish mountain trail and the Sahara desert. Each track has its own obstacles and pitfalls and, as mentioned above, foreknowledge of a particular track's conditions is invaluable. The computer controlled opponents' AI is very challenging to beat, but in a nice touch they do make the

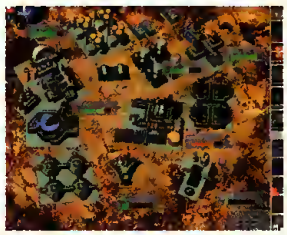


***Screamer 2*: a PC racing game with a decent frame rats ssd snsppy control? What s coscspt**

PC

STAR STRUCK





Is Accolsds's oss attsmpt at stratsgy, ths colosiss srs driven by those littis aiding bars

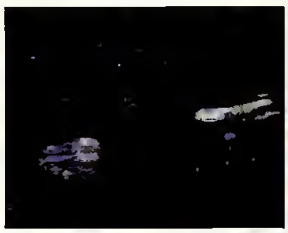
Star Control 3

Publisher: Accolade
Developer: Legend Entertainment

Following one of the best sequels ever created is not an easy thing to do. Yet *Star Control 3* tries its best to live up to the grandeur of *Star Control 2*. Although it may not surpass expectations, *Star Control 3* does a great job of supplying hours of gaming enjoyment.

The game attempts to balance the action of ship-to-ship fighting with colonization and exploration. The exploration is entertaining enough, but the strategy portion leaves quite a bit to be desired. Creating colonies to produce fuel and ships just gives you something to do when you can't find the next race of aliens. And controlling colonies is limited to adjusting a set of sliders to prioritize what they build, not how they build them, or how quickly. Which is fine, because colony management is dull, dry, and sucks the fun away from the game.

Luckily, in true *Star Control* tradition, there are plenty of star systems to explore, ships to fight, and aliens to talk to. The aliens are a combination of digitized footage of puppets and computer animation. Most of them aren't terribly stunning — the simple, hand-drawn art in *Star Control 2* was much more intriguing. However, the voice acting and dialog throughout the game is top-notch, and generates more than its share of chuckles for those whose sense of humor runs that way. The interface is simple and easy to navigate, and the game even contains a separate "Super-Melee" option for players that want to jump right into the space combat (which supports head-to-head play over modem, serial connection, or LAN).



Space combat is rssl-tims msien. Thsse ships srs is 3D, but you sas switch to s 2D mode, which makes fighting much easiar



Wsird sliens sbousd is this gams. This oss looks liks s mix betwens s sick cobrs ssd soms nasty mushrooms

Although the strategy elements and uninspiring footage of the aliens aren't as exciting as fans of the series might have hoped for, the story and variety more than make up for it. This a game worth the attention of any fan of the *Star Control* universe.
Rating: ★★★★

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occasional mistake, just to keep things fair.

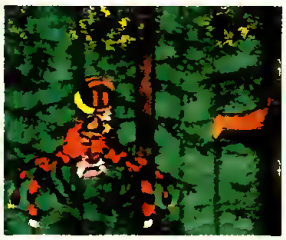
The environment and all of the cars are polygonal constructs, each of which have been texture-mapped beautifully. The soundtrack is professionally composed techno that really pushes the adrenaline levels. Finally, the multiplayer modes (one of which is a two-player split-screen — another console take) add lots of replay value. *Screamer 2* is a winner in any book.
Rating: ★★★★

Super NES

Donkey Kong Country 3
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Rare

As the 16-bit age winds down, quality games for those systems are few and far between. Fortunately for Super Nintendo fans, the third installment of the *Donkey Kong Country* series indicates that the SNES seems to be making a more graceful exit than the Sega Genesis.

Although initially *DKC3* seems like a straight knock-off of the first two games, there have been incremental advances in graphics and game control. The graphics seem crisper and more detailed than even the already impressive look featured in *Donkey Kong Country 2*. However, the most welcome and noticeable improvement is the tightening up of the control. Any control slop previously exhibited in the series has been eliminated, and movement and action in the game is now extremely precise and intuitive. As for gameplay, the *DKC* series has always been considered in the top echelon of platform games, and fans of the series will have little to complain about. The excellent level designs, coupled with perfectly balanced and challenging gameplay is exactly what we've come to expect from Nintendo.



No one knows monkey business like Nintendo, and *DKC3* is more fun than a barrel of monkeys

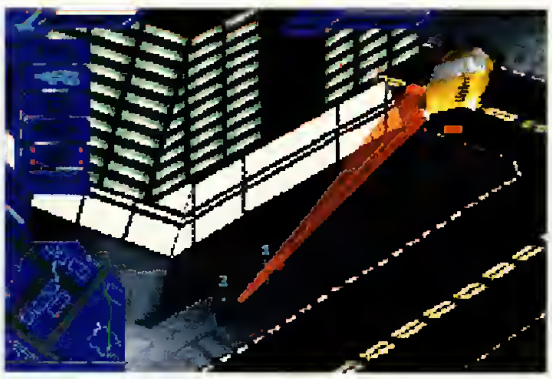
Of course, this also means the game is almost totally devoid of innovation. If you've played either of the previous two games in the series, you'll know exactly what *DKC3* has to offer. This may come as welcome news to fans, but gives little enticement to anyone hoping for something exciting and new. Ultimately, *Donkey Kong Country 3* is just more of the same, although given its pedigree, "more of the same" is pretty good.
Rating: ★★★

PC

ULTIMATE SYN

Syndicate Wars
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Bullfrog

After an extremely long wait Bullfrog has finally served up the promised sequel to *Syndicate*, and the good news (and the bad news) is that *Syndicate Wars* is even more dark and menacing than the original. Set in a future society where murder, intimidation, and global conquest are the keys to power, players lead a squad of four cybernetically controlled henchmen through rival cities, kicking ass and taking names as they struggle to maintain control of an empire. In a nod to *Warcraft* and *Command & Conquer*, you'll be able to play as one of two groups in separate campaigns. The reigning champ from the original — The EuroCorp Syndicate — makes a return while the new kid on the block is The Church of the Epoch, a radical religious cult bent on undermining the status quo.



Dynamic lighting effects, 3D characters, and a rotational world give *Syndicate Wars* an even darker vision of the future

But the new storyline is just a drop in the bucket. The big difference is how it looks. Where the original game delivered an attractive and brightly lit isometric playground, *Syndicate Wars* uses a new, fully rotational, polygon-based 3D engine with dark graphics and atmospheric effects liberally sprinkled throughout. If you like your Cyberpunk dark, this would make Syd Mead (*Blade Runner*) proud. Even though the chunky graphics and ragged characters in the standard VGA mode are a turn off, the higher end SVGA graphics are stunning. On the control side, the new rotational engine means the interface is much more complex, and the limited zoom controls and touchy rotation makes getting started a pain. But once players have gotten the hang of it, there are tons of new weapons, the environment is completely interactive (you can bring down whole buildings), and there are loads of missions to sink your teeth into.



Some Acolytes from The Church of the Epoch get their clock cleaned as the EuroCorp syndicate tightens its grip on the world

Despite all the new goodies, Bullfrog could have, and should have, done more with the concept. The basic gameplay hasn't changed from the original — persuade individuals to join your syndicate, murder rivals, and blow the crap out of everybody and anything that stands in your way. Extremely entertaining of course, but some new challenge would have pushed this one into five-star territory.
Rating: ★★★★

SORRY!

No new games were made available for review this month on the following systems

- Macintosh
- 3DO
- Genesis
- Virtual Boy
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It's mail, man

In last month's letters section (**NG 24**), you published a letter from a Mr. Hastings, complaining that Interplay's *Conquest of the New World* did "nothing but glorify conquistadors."

Mr. Hastings raises some interesting questions for the computer game industry by his criticism: Is a "game" supposed to entertain or teach? Can it do both?

At first appearance his letter appears hostile, rambling, inconsistent, and insulting, but when you examine it with cooler emotions, his appeal for "telling the true story" is a compelling one. Yet, is a game the proper vehicle for teaching history? I think it's reasonable to believe that if people are entertained, there's a better chance of getting one's message across, but the message needs the correct medium (apologies to Marshall McLuhan). I don't think that a "game" is the correct way to teach someone about the horrors of an earlier historical epoch. Yet if *Conquest of the New World* can spark enough interest in the colonial period to send someone to the library or a bookstore for further information, then history has been served and we've managed to both entertain and teach.

A "game" is meant to be fun. I doubt anyone would want to play a "game" that emphasized disease (the major killer of the Native population), genocide, or slavery (all parts of the history of the colonization of the Western Hemisphere). I doubt that anyone would want to play a "game" based on World War II that emphasized concentration camps, mass execution of prisoners, and the destruction of towns housing women and children. Would anyone want to play an autoracing "game" that simulated cars flying into the stands and killing the audience?



***Conquest of the New World*: Innocent fun, or harmful lies?**

In the Introduction to *Conquest of the New World*, we state that it's "...not a game that depicts what occurred in the 16th century in historically accurate detail. Instead, it provides an opportunity to participate in the spirit of the 16th century's drive for exploration and world conquest." I hope that everyone playing *Conquest* will be challenged and entertained. I also hope that they will be stimulated enough to further explore the period in their local library or by watching the Learning Channel.

Vince DeNardo,
Producer, Interplay
Conquest of the New World

Um, with all due respect, we don't know if we agree. Can sensitive history — history that everyone agrees should not be forgotten — be grossly distorted for entertainment purposes with the justification that it may "send someone to the library or a bookstore" to find out the real truth?

What do others think?

Is it possible to do a simulation game like *EF:2000* on PlayStation or any other next-gen consoles?

Sandy Yendes
yendes1@ix.netcom.com

Yeah, it's possible. But conventional (we're not saying correct) wisdom states that they aren't made because: a) videogame players can't be bothered with such complicated games; and b) the joypad doesn't offer enough control options.

OK, Super NES *Bomberman* is as good as you guys say it is, but what about *Bomberman* for the TG-16? Man, that game let five people battle it out with cool bombs and all kinds of power-ups and then came *Bomberman '93* — and was this not *1,000* times better? In *Bomberman '94* five players could battle it out on eight different screens, getting all kinds of cool power-ups. You could even ride animals (including kangaroos) around the mazes, and each one had a special power or ability.

Forget the Super NES version and its wimpy four-player layout. You must see it in the TurboGrafx 16, otherwise it's like saying that *Doom* was not a great game until it appeared on PlayStation.

John Sweeney
jsween@osprey.unf.edu

We were never big fans of the animals introduced in later versions of *Super Bomberman*, but you're right — the TG-16 version did rock. Has anyone out there discovered *Super Bomberman* as a result of the Top 100 listing? If so, please drop us a line and let us know how you're getting on.

In a CIS forum on the Internet, it was reported that your September issue had an article on "The new Amiga" preparing to kill Macs, PCs, and so on.

I believe that you were talking about something called a BeBox. This is not an Amiga. Amigas have been taken over by VIScorp, mainly to use the technology for set-top boxes, but it claims it will be coming out with a "killer" version of the Amiga too. As VIScorp has a number of original Amiga engineers on board, this might just happen.

The Amiga apparently refuses to die. Certainly, the accelerated A4000 is the computer of choice for me, for both work and home.

Adrian Ashfield
72204.2101@compuserve.com

We'd like to see a new Amiga rise to the top, also. Let's all keep our fingers crossed.

I read in a magazine about a new CD-ROM recorder that can record 650MB on a CD (I think it's called CD-R). My friend told me that you can just go to a Blockbuster and rent a PlayStation game and make a copy of it. But I told him it's

not possible because of the black covering underneath the CD to protect it from being copied. So can you tell me who is right?

James T Lee
spark006@juno.com

Not only is the practice you describe illegal, it would also be prohibitively expensive (have you any idea how much these machines cost?). And, yes, it's also impossible (PlayStation discs have more than one security device designed to stop their unlawful duplication).

In response to the comment of "Nostalgia aside, the 2600 sucks, the joystick sucks, the fact that there's only one button sucks, and the graphics really, really suck," in your review of *River Raid*, I'd like to say, "Please!"

If it wasn't for the 2600, shit known as the Saturn and PlayStation would not be around today! The 2600 is the greatest game system ever invented. Games on the 2600 are 100% pure gameplay, with none of this FMV, polygon, and rendered shit that fills most of today's games. Today's games are 90% graphics and 10% gameplay. I'd rather play *Adventure*, *Haunted House*, or *Dark Chambers* on the 2600 than shit like *Resident Evil*, *Doom*, or *Super Mario 64*.

It is great to see retrogaming coming back, as today's games are pure graphic fluff shit with no gameplay whatsoever. That is the trouble will all of the...

lynx@ripco2.ripco.com

And so on, and so on, and so on. This letter was cut (along with its many additional expletives), but it's obvious to all what the childish writer is trying so hard to say. Unfortunately, it is juvenile, offensive trash such as this that is the reason why so much of the value of the retrogaming movement is ignored. There is much to be said for the gameplay of old titles, but when it is championed by ignorant, rude adolescents, then the baby ends up being thrown out with the bath water.

In your review of *Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2* for the PC, you seem to make the A-10 out to be a "somewhat-less-than-maneuverable" aircraft, implying that the airplane responds somewhat sluggishly.

Your poor rating of this game seemed primarily based upon your assumption that the A-10 was a poor handling "flying death machine," and that the game responding "nimbly & quickly" to commands was unrealistic.

Now, I don't want to sound like a know-it-all, but you might want to do a little more research on the A-10. In fact, the A-10 is among the most maneuverable aircraft in our inventory! Barrel loops actually are quite feasible in



***Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2* — realistic or not?**

this aircraft, in fact they are sometimes necessary after a standard attack run. It's also quite possible for the A-10 to "gain altitude while flying upside down."

If your review of this game truly is based upon its "inaccuracy," you might want to revise your result; the game may be more accurate than you think!

Tellez, Brandon
Tellez@comm.vafb.af.mil

Thanks for your observations. Our reviewer has been, um, sent to Siberia. But the review score stands.

I am upset! According to the interview with Hironobu Sakaguchi, Square is not going to develop *FF7* or any similar game for the N64. He said that *FF7*, which is close to 1,500MB, would be impossible to even be put on the N64. How much, though, would the built-in graphic capabilities of the N64 reduce the size of *FF7*? *Super Mario 64* is a graphically rich and contains a large environment and is only 8MB!

Jonathan M Loule
louie-loule@juno.com

Square's decision has as much to do with bottom-line business as it has with CDs versus cartridges — perhaps Sony made Square an offer it couldn't refuse. But you have to figure that yes, if Square really wanted to produce games for the N64 then it could. It did, after all, manage to produce some excellent games for the cart-based Super NES.

I was disappointed in the interview with Trip Hawkins in **NG** 22. He didn't acknowledge the gross incompetence for which he must bear ultimate responsibility. Why didn't he mention the horrendous hardware and software design mistakes 3DO made? For example, 3DO picked the ARM microprocessor as the basic chip around which the 3DO machine was based. That dog of a chip didn't even have a integer divide instruction, which means division was handled through software — which means slow division. The only other famous computer based on the ARM chip is that other winner, the Apple Newton. Why name your company 3DO, when the machine had no 3D graphics power at all, worse than a low-grade PC at the time?

What about the bogus

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claims of high resolution, when in reality the machine ran at 320x240, but pixel doubled with smoothing to 640x480? The true underlying resolution was worse than the NES!

What about the ridiculously complicated and buggy graphics co-processors in the machine? They were way too complicated for many programmers to figure out. How about the biggest problem of all, lack of RAM? I stood up early and warned 3DO staff that their machine was doomed unless it had generous amounts of RAM, because you needed to temporarily hold sound effects and animations just before using them. Mr. Hawkins is a great salesman, but is perhaps inappropriate as head of a technology firm.

Edward de Jong
edward@magicmouse.com

Actually, we thought that Trip accepted responsibility for his failed 32-bit platform honorably.

Why would anyone need an incentive from a company to produce games?

In the article "Can Apple Run With the Big Guns?" a director of "a small Mac development house" complains that Apple isn't "providing the incentive developers need for committing to a platform that has smaller sales."

What incentives does this director need? I play games because they're fun. I design games because it's fun and I want to share my game worlds with other people. The Macintosh is my platform of choice. I love it, and it has a large number of gamers starving for great games. What incentives do you need?

Jason Parsons
arakasi@superstore.com

If only everyone else was so altruistic.

Who is Aldo Fonzerelli? At the start of the magazine, he has a trade mark symbol next to his name, followed by, "Heeeeeeeeeey!" Does he play *Super Bomberman 2* with four people all the time?

Brian A Botley
sndmn@juno.com

He sells advertising space in **Next Generation**, and yes he plays *Bomberman* (as Mr. Pink). He also has large hair.

What's this thing with *Maria* games? Every *Maria* game except *Super Maria RPG* follows the same boring cute storyline. Bowser comes and kidnaps the princess and Mario goes to save her. I mean couldn't it be a bit more creative and at least give a good story to go along with a great game? Let's say the princess is abducted by aliens or is pulled into the ocean by a giant squid or something.

JarHead888@aol.com

Yeah, but who wants a girlfriend covered in squid sucker-marks? It's not exactly your classic fairy tale ending, now is it?

I feel that it is time that somebody spoke up about Nintendo's U.S. release of the Nintendo 64. I own two videogame specialty shops in Vancouver, B.C. and, like all other store owners, I placed my orders for Nintendo 64 very early. Now we all knew that there would be a shortage of systems, so I ordered 48 systems from 4 different distributors, for a total of 144 units. And like other retailers, early in the summer we began taking deposits to guarantee that customers would receive them.

Now I couldn't care less if Nintendo decided to release the product early (the big retail chains started selling Nintendo 64s on Thursday September 26th, instead of the supposed Sunday 29th "launch"), but imagine my surprise when I find out that my distributors wouldn't even receive the machines until Monday September 30 and wouldn't ship them until the following day. I frantically called all the people who had paid their deposits to let them know that although Toys R Us and EB would be selling their machines on Friday, they would have to wait for me to get systems and then pick them up from me on Monday.

But the fun wasn't over yet. I then learned that Nintendo had released the product to their "direct" accounts first, so many distributors were only receiving a fraction of their shipments. So of the 144 systems I had ordered, I was confirmed to receive seven. SEVEN! That's less than 5% of my order. So can you guess what I spent my weekend doing? Driving all over the city trying to round up enough systems just to fill my customer's deposits, and buying the product at full retail only to sell it for the same amount.

Now, retailers have never made money selling hardware (a fact most customers should learn), but that's a bit ridiculous, don't you think?

After all is said and ,Nintendo will come out and say what a successful launch they had, and praise will rain down from the heavens. But remember Nintendo, it's guys like me who sell your systems for you, not some old lady in a Wal-Mart. When a customer comes into my store, I take the time to show them the good and bad points of a system, and as nice as *Maria 64* may look, if you piss enough of us little guys off, Sony will sure have a great Christmas.

Tyler Burgess, Owner
Encore Video Games
tburgess@diablo.intergate.bc.ca

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Mystery Word Grid

	H				
		E			
P	I	N	C	H	W
	R				
S					

MYSTERY WORD ____

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS .....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK .....D
BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO V
STOMP .....T	STAND .....R	PRESS .....E	DREAM .....O
CRUSH I	SCORE .....H	SLANT L	CHASE .....P

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and — for what it's worth — you weren't the only pissed independent retailer we heard from after Nintendo's "successful" launch of N64.

This type of occurrence may seem alien and absurd to many gamers, but it happens all the time. Sony definitely has its "favorite" retail partners for PlayStation, and Sega turned its back on all but a few chosen chain stores when it originally launched Saturn in the U.S. Unfortunately, the practice is just another cog in the wheels of the videogame business, and it probably won't go away.

There are two real problems that result from it: 1) Independent videogame stores (like Tyler's) support and nurse the game industry through hard times, only to be kicked in the teeth by the major chain stores swooping in and muscling "sweet" deals from Nintendo, Sega, and Sony when the industry finally booms. 2) It's easy to see why some stores develop prejudices against certain companies and certain products, and this leads to partisan advice in stores, and gamers getting screwed.

I own a PC and I buy a lot of games for it. The boxes that computer games come in usually just contain the CD and a registration card. The rest of the box is filled with a complex cardboard frame to support the exterior. You used to have to buy audio CDs in large boxes until people realized it was a waste of materials. Will this ever happen to computer game boxes, or will we just have to keep on buying the game and a bunch of junk we don't need?

Mike Weinstein
70342.223@compuserve.com

Because there is no dominant influence in the PC games market (as opposed to the console market, where Nintendo, Sony, and Sega direct game packaging), as long as retailers and distributors are happy to stock large fancy packages, the PC game companies will make them. It's one of the best ways of grabbing a gamers' attention.

I can't believe it! My heart is tearing through my chest, and my lungs are letting loose their fury. You know why? Because I have my N64! My brother read on your web page that several stores, including Toys R Us, had eliminated the deadline and started selling the systems early. We ran to Toys R Us and picked up our pre-ordered system.

Thanks for posting that news on your page.

Rafael Perez
cperezm@msn.com

All part of the service at http://www.next-generation.com

I cannot help but wonder why you have "M2" on the top line of **NG**'s cover. After all, M2 does not yet exist as an available consumer system. Matsushita does not even have a release date.

grew@pop.total.net

True, M2 isn't released yet, but the interest in Matsushita's system among gamers warrants its inclusion on **Next Gen**'s cover.

I just had to say I really enjoyed the interview with Sony's Mr. Tokunaka in **NG 23**. Unlike his American counterparts, he did not feel the need to either bash or otherwise sling mud at his competitors. For that I can respect him. Too often I hear from American CEOs whose mistaken sense of loyalty leads them to make grand statements and derogatory comments of little worth.

Vinny
103527.1106@compuserve.com

Yes, Mr. Tokunaka's polite and respectful opinions do make a refreshing change of pace from the usual mud slinging, but his American colleagues do make for more sparky reading. We'll try and keep a balance of all opinions and personalities.

Sega is claiming that *Virtua Fighter 3* will arrive on the Saturn in late 1997. But how does Sega expect to overhaul such a monstrosity of game programming into its 32-bit home console?

Will there be an add-on peripheral, sort of like the 32X, that will include a PowerPC 603e chip? Or will Sega dump its support on Saturn and create a 64-bit Saturn 2? Because otherwise I know that *VF3* on Saturn will just be *VF2* but with just a little smoother animation, different background, and different clothing. Wow.

John Douglass,
Salt Lake City

Of course, it will be very difficult for Sega to do an accurate conversion of *VF3*. But yes, it is possible that Sega will introduce some kind of hardware accelerator for the Saturn version of *Virtua Fighter 3* (perhaps plugging into Saturn's cartridge or extension ports, and bundled with the CD), although this may make the game outrageously expensive ($100 plus). But let's not judge a game before we've seen it.

Regarding the *Quake* discussion in **NG 23**. There are two reasons to play a videogame. One is to be entertained (like watching a movie), and the other is to master a skill (like playing tennis or pool). I play Square RPGs to be entertained. I play *Quake* to master a skill. There is room for both.

Gung
cclayton@mail.utexas.edu

Agreed.

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Next Month

Videogame myths:

Fact or Fiction?

Q. Did Nintendo help Sony design PlayStation?

Q. Did the military really ask Atari to produce a version of the coin-op *BattleZone* to train tank commanders?

Q. Were there more Atari 2600 *E.T.* cartridges manufactured than there were Atari 2600s in existence? Did over a million end up getting buried in the New Mexico desert?

Q. Did Bill Stealey and Sid Meier really start Microprose on a bet?

Q. Was *Pac Man* originally called "Puc Man" but the name changed for fear of grafitti artists altering the "P"?

Q. Was the name *Donkey Kong* a mistranslation — by American Nintendo employees — of the original Japanese packaging?

Q. Have special custom levels of *Doom* been produced to train U.S. marines?

Q. Did Shigeru Miyamoto base the character of Mario on the landlord of an apartment complex he was staying at in New York?

Q. Has anyone actually *died* from playing a videogame?

Q. Is a group of U.S. politicians really trying to ban videogames outright?

Q. Did Sega really try and buy M2 from Matsushita?

Videogame culture is full of mythology and rumor.
And, as is often the case, fact can be stranger than fiction.
Next month, **Next Generation** sets the record straight

Next Generation #25 on sale December 17, 1996.

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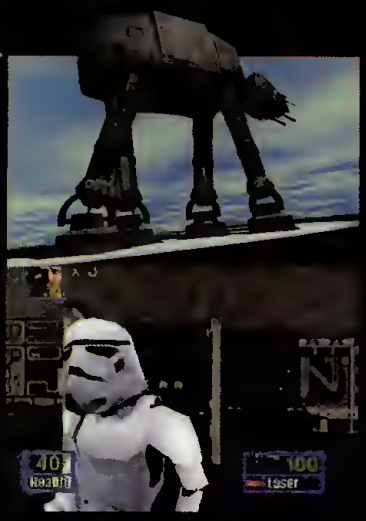
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